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Note

Our next special issue (December, 1961) will be concerned with Synge and O'Casey. The deadline for submission of manuscripts for this issue is September 1, 1961.

The Contributors

JOHN C. WENTZ. Assistant Professor of English at Rutgers University, The College of South Jersey, Mr. Wentz contributed the "Filadelfia" entry to the *Enciclopedia dello Spettacolo*.

ARNOLD L. GOLDSMITH. Professor Goldsmith, who teaches English at Wayne State University, has published articles on nineteenth and twentieth century American literature. Co-editor of the *Publication Guide for Literary and Linguistic Scholars*, he is now working on a critical biography of Charles G. Norris.

CLAUDE K. ABRAHAM. Dr. Abraham is presently Instructor in French at the University of Illinois.

FERDINANDO D. MAURINO. A specialist in Spanish *Modernismo* and contemporary Italian literature (with particular attention to Neapolitan writers), Dr. Maurino has published several articles and books. He is Professor of Romance Languages and Literature at Dickinson College.

ARTHUR H. NETHERCOT. Professor of English at Northwestern University, Mr. Nethercot is the author of *Men and Supermen: The Shavian Portrait Gallery*. The first volume of his two-volume biography, *The First Five Lives of Annie Besant*, was published earlier this year.

PAVEL A. MARKOV. Currently at the Institute of Theatrical Art in Moscow, Professor Markov is a prominent Soviet writer and theatrical critic. His published books include *New Theatrical Trends*, *Theatrical Portraits*, and *Komissarzhevskaya and the Moscow Art Theater*. Many of his books, including *The Soviet Theater*, have appeared in English.

ELY STOCK. Mr. Stock is a Teaching Associate in the Department of American Civilization at Brown University where he is completing work for the Ph.D.

BERNARD KNIENER. Professor Knieger teaches contemporary literature at the University of Wisconsin. He has published critical articles on various subjects.

WINIFRED L. DUSENBURY. Professor Dusenbury teaches English at the University of Florida. Her book, *The Theme of Loneliness in Modern American Drama*, was recently published by the University of Florida Press.

JAMES R. HURT. Mr. Hurt is instructor in the Department of English, Speech, and Dramatic Arts at the University of Kentucky's Northwest Center at Henderson, Kentucky.

THE SECOND MLA CONFERENCE ON MODERN DRAMA

Report of the Secretary

THE SECOND CONFERENCE ON MODERN DRAMA met Tuesday, December 27, 1960, at the national meeting of the MLA with about forty people in attendance. Professor Robert G. Shedd of Ohio State University acted as chairman and Professor John C. Wentz of Rutgers University as secretary. The program consisted of a brief business meeting, a report by Professor Walter H. Sokel of Columbia University on needs and opportunities for further research in Expressionist drama, a report by Professor Edwin Engel of the University of Michigan on recent O'Neill criticism and needs for further work on O'Neill and his plays, and a panel discussion of "On the Newness of the New Drama," a paper by Professor R. J. Kaufmann of the University of Rochester.

In his opening remarks, Professor Shedd discussed the possibility of establishing a formal organization within the MLA for members with a special interest in modern drama. The suggestion has been made that a new section concerned with drama since about 1870 should be created. No immediate action in this direction is contemplated, but interested persons are invited to express their opinions on the subject to Professor Shedd, Professor A. C. Edwards of the University of Kansas, or Professor Stanley Weintraub of Pennsylvania State University. A third conference on modern drama is planned for the 1961 MLA meeting at Cincinnati. Finally, Professor Edwards, editor of *Modern Drama*, invited his readers to send him whatever comments, criticisms, or suggestions they might have relating to the conduct and policy of the journal.

Professor Sokel devoted most of his report to a critical and selective listing of important books, articles, and bibliographical studies dealing with Expressionist drama which have appeared in the past two or three years. (*Modern Drama* will print a summary of the bibliographical portion of this report in the May, 1961 issue.) Professor Sokel directed his concluding remarks to the need for a satisfactory definition of the term "Expressionism," which by now has become very vague indeed. He suggested that one might approach the problem by devising a series of categories and questions based upon the traditional Aristotelian classifications. What, for example, are the essential characteristics of Expressionist plot, motivation, dialogue, or characterization?

Professor Engel began his report by commenting briefly on three recent books about O'Neill and his work. Crosswell Bowen's *The Curse of the Misbegotten* (1959) is a more or less "journalistic" biographical study of O'Neill and his family which is weakened by inadequate documentation, factual inaccuracy, and the thesis that the troubles of the O'Neills may be attributed in large part to an ancestral Irish curse. In *Part of a Long Story* (1960), Agnes Bolton, O'Neill's second wife, has written an account of the years when the playwright was her husband. Here the discriminating reader must sift the significant from the trivial. Doris Falk's *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension* (1958) is a sound scholarly interpretation of O'Neill's work, but the clearly defined scope of Professor Falk's book for the most part precludes biography or the detailed criticism of individual plays. Recent articles on O'Neill cited by Professor Engel include: John Henry Raleigh, "O'Neill's *Long Day's Journey . . .* and New England Irish Catholicism" (*Partisan Review*, Fall, 1959); Cyrus Day, "The Iceman and the Bridegroom" (*Modern Drama*, May, 1958); and the items included in the special O'Neill issue (December, 1960) of *Modern Drama*.

The needs in O'Neill scholarship are numerous. The "big book on American drama"—a work comparable to Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought* or Matthiessen's *American Renaissance*—remains to be written, as does a sound biography of O'Neill himself. It is also time, Professor Engel believes, for a book-length collection of critical essays on O'Neill. Specialized studies might explore such topics as O'Neill's relation to Strindberg and to Pirandello and O'Neill as a man of the theater. Finally, O'Neill's dramas deserve a more imaginative interpretation on the stage than they have lately received.

The conference next turned to a panel discussion of Professor Kaufmann's paper "On the Newness of the New Drama," copies of which were mailed to all participants early in December. Professor Drew B. Pallette of the University of Southern California served as leader, and the other panelists were Professor David Krause of Brown University, Professor Henry Popkin of New York University, and Professor Laurent LeSage of Pennsylvania State University. Professor Kaufmann, unfortunately, was unable to attend the meeting.

"On the Newness of the New Drama," as Professor Kaufmann sees it, is something of a sequel to his earlier article "On the Supersession of the Modern Classic Style."

Professor Kaufmann begins his paper by saying that the playwrights of the new theater—men such as Ionesco, Genet, and Beckett—are engaged in annotating the context of modern life, though not necessarily in making judgments.* In doing so, the dramatists have evolved

* The Secretary must here acknowledge his indebtedness to Professor Pallette, whose abstract of Professor Kaufmann's paper was presented to the conference substantially as it appears in this paragraph.

new techniques of staging, dislocated language, abandoned orthodox plot, and created a new concept of the un-heroic protagonist. In turning to the comic, they have taken up methods pioneered by Strindberg and Chekhov, though the emphasis is different. Common to all these dramatists is a blend of comedy and pathos, of the satiric and the tragic. But Strindberg stresses the disillusionment of the questing self, whereas the new dramatists (e.g., Ionesco in *The Killer*) typically concern themselves with the individual and his problems in discovering his loyalties and his enemies, accepting his limitations, and establishing some sort of contact with his fellow men in the social milieu in which he lives. Consequently, Professor Kaufmann believes, the new drama is not one of despair. In Brecht there is a constant insistence upon humanity, and the new writers also show the persistence of the human spirit. They are the critics of despair: their drama makes us aware of our own shared humanity.

Professor Palette began the panel discussion by saying that the developments noted by Professor Kaufmann cannot be regarded as merely rather special, off-Broadway phenomena. Indeed, Ionesco's *Rhinoceros* featured Olivier in London, and Duerrenmatt's *The Visit* has appeared on Broadway. Professor Kaufmann's paper, however, is concerned almost entirely with the continental movement; Professor Palette would like to see further discussions of the extent to which this new drama is paralleled in England and America. The differences between Osborne and Wesker on the one hand and Ionesco and Genet on the other appear to be more significant than the similarities. Behan's *The Quare Fellow* is a conventional play, whereas *The Hostage* suggests Brecht rather more than it does the theater of the absurd. American examples of the sort of play with which Professor Kaufmann is concerned seem at present to be few, isolated, and specialized. Perhaps, Professor Palette suggests, the drama of the United States and England is too "compassionate," too "affirmative" to become deeply involved in the new trends.

Professor Krause found "On the Newness of the New Drama" vague, self-contradictory, confusingly organized, and stylistically repellent, and his documentation of this opinion was candid and detailed. (The Secretary, who understands his role to be that of "honest broker," is struggling to avoid the semantic sin of confusing "judgments" with "reports.") "The drama," Professor Kaufmann writes, "can escape judgmental obligations by reason of its visual impressiveness and by nature of its essentially conflictual organization." Professor Krause finds this sentence baffling and, insofar as he can understand it, is not at all sure the opinion it expresses can be substantiated. "Judgmental" and "conflictual" here, like "entelechy," "charismatics," and "phenomenological" elsewhere in the paper, necessitated unrewarding

excursions into the dictionary. Then there are the metaphors: "It is only in the imitative suburbs of the new drama's achievement," writes Professor Kaufmann, "that it is private and nihilistic." In Professor Krause's opinion, the new drama is often "private and nihilistic" in "the downtown section." If, as Professor Kaufmann asserts, "art is primarily diagnostic and not curative," how can the art of drama go about "rehabilitating the imaginative habits of a generation made dull by an over-formalized existence"? Finally, Professor Krause wonders how Professor Kaufmann can reconcile the thesis of "On the Supersession of the Modern Classic Style" with some of the contentions of "On the Newness of the New Drama."

Professor Popkin, like Professor Pallette, believed that Professor Kaufmann sometimes blurred important distinctions between the theater of the absurd (Ionesco, Genet, *et al.*) and the work of such playwrights as Adamov and, more particularly, Brecht.

Professor LeSage thought that Professor Kaufmann's paper suffered from an overabundance of themes but that it offered much that is stimulating and perceptive.

"When I asked Professor Kaufmann to write a paper for us," Professor Shedd remarked as the conferees scrambled for the door, "I knew I could depend on him for something provocative." Most of the people who attended the 1960 conference now understand Professor Shedd's confidence.

JOHN C. WENTZ

THE "DISCOVERY SCENE" IN *BILLY BUDD*

IN 1952, writing in the *Pacific Spectator*, Tyrus Hillway made a surprising statement about Professors Coxe and Chapman's dramatic adaptation of Herman Melville's *Billy Budd*. According to Mr. Hillway,

... the final interview between Billy and Captain Vere could not have been what Coxe and Chapman make of it; for they have Billy going to his doom bewildered and still appalled by the fact that he must suffer. In the book, on the other hand, he has clearly come at this point not only to an understanding of his fate but even to a willingness to accept it. As for the exact words used by Captain Vere in explaining matters to Billy, Melville, indeed, leaves us in ignorance.¹

Not only do I disagree with Mr. Hillway, but I also feel that the exact opposite is true: in the play, Billy Budd is no longer bewildered when he climbs to his death, and he has finally recognized his tragic flaw. In fact, Coxe and Chapman have made Billy a kinetic character, whereas Melville's is static. In the novel there is no evidence to support the statement that Billy "has clearly come at this point to an understanding of his fate." On the contrary, when Billy forgives Captain Vere, he does so out of the same blind ignorance and naïveté that have characterized his short life.

Let us look at the evidence. In the novel,² Billy is a virile, handsome, ingenuous, good-natured, competent sailor who is loved by his shipmates. Melville identifies him with Alexander the Great (p. 135), Apollo (p. 141), Hercules (p. 145), Achilles (p. 207), a Catholic priest (p. 139), "a condemned vestal priestess in the moment of being buried alive" (p. 226), and "the young Isaac" (p. 252). All of these allusions enhance the figure of Billy, adding to his stature and suggesting to the reader that there is a symbolical level of meaning which is the heart of the story. To even the most superficial reader, the novel is filled with religious overtones, Billy being equated with no less a figure than Jesus Christ. The Christian imagery is especially evident at the end of the book in the description of Billy's crucifixion.

Unlike Christ, however, Billy has one obvious physical flaw—his stammering. Melville tells us that like the beautiful Georgiana in Hawthorne's "The Birthmark," Billy has one imperfection—the inability to articulate when emotionally disturbed. But that is not the lad's only

1. "Billy Budd: Melville's Human Sacrifice," *Pacific Spectator*, VI (Summer 1952), 342-3.

2. Herman Melville, *Billy Budd*, in *Melville's Billy Budd*, ed. F. Barron Freeman (Cambridge, 1948). All references to the novel are to this edition.

flaw. Billy also suffers from ignorance. Even Pip in *Moby-Dick* has more intelligence than Billy. The other sailors recognize this limitation and nickname him "Baby" Budd. The symbolic significance of his last name also reinforces this idea. Billy is an easy victim of Claggart because he is blind to the evil which the Master-at-Arms represents. He is unable to comprehend Dansker's enigmatic warnings. He is, says Melville, like Adam before knowledge (pp. 147 and 219). A close study of the figures of speech used to describe Billy reveals not only allusions to the famous biblical, mythological, and historical figures already mentioned, but also references to various lower forms of life, namely animals and birds. Thus Billy is identified with a goldfinch (p. 137), a "blood horse" (p. 146), a St. Bernard (p. 147), an "illiterate nightingale" (p. 147), a heifer (p. 193), and a "young horse" (p. 201); at the court-martial, he has a look of "dumb expressiveness not unlike that which a dog of generous breed might turn upon his master seeking in his face some elucidation of a previous gesture ambiguous to the canine intelligence" (p. 241).

It is my contention that this canine intelligence is Billy's tragic flaw. His heroic virtues are apt to dazzle us into losing sight of the fact that "a barbarian Billy radically was" (p. 260). Nowhere in the novel can I find convincing evidence to support Mr. Hillway's thesis that Billy understands his fate. He accepts it, yes—the way an Irish setter might accept his master's punishment without turning on him. If there is any understanding, it should come in chapter twenty-three, where Vere goes to Billy's compartment to inform him of the court's decision. This should be one of the crucial chapters in the book, but it is not. Melville refuses to meet the challenge and evades the issue. He simply tells us that "beyond the communication of the sentence what took place at this interview was never known" (p. 251). Melville tries to cover up this omission with the lame suggestion that Vere and Billy have a rare nature, "so rare indeed as to be all but incredible to average minds however much cultivated" (p. 251). He refuses to do any more than conjecture in vague generalities about what happened in the privacy of Billy's prison, and consequently he fails to convince us that Billy has understood why he has to die. The philosophical reasoning of Vere is beyond Billy's comprehension. True, in the execution scene, Billy forgives Captain Vere, but out of ignorant goodness, the same stupid naïvete that is so characteristic of him.

Only in his symbolic imagery does Melville give the vaguest hint that Billy has changed. Condemned to die at dawn, Billy is kept prisoner in irons between two gun batteries. "In contrast with the funeral tone of these surroundings the prone sailor's exterior apparel, white *jumper* and white duck trousers, each more or less soiled, dimly

glimmered in the obscure light of the bay like a patch of discolored snow in early April lingering at some upland cave's black mouth" (pp. 257-8). Here we have the suggestion that Billy's innocence (whiteness) has been sullied by his experiences with Claggart. The reference to the "patch of discolored snow in early April" implies the idea of spiritual rebirth and regeneration. But more than this Melville will not tell us, except that the prisoner's "agony, mainly proceeding from a generous young heart's virgin experience of the diabolical incarnate and effective in some men . . . was over now. It survived not the something healing in the closeted interview with Captain Vere" (p. 259).

To the credit of Professors Coxé and Chapman is the addition in their play of a discovery scene. This scene fulfills in every way what Maxwell Anderson calls "the essence of tragedy." In it the protagonist discovers his flaw and consequently alters his course of action, though it is too late to save his life. The discovery results in a spiritual regeneration, and the protagonist dies a nobler person.

Coxé and Chapman have shifted this scene (Scene Two, Act Three) to Vere's cabin. Billy tells his Captain that all he wants is to understand why he must die; he "can't get the rights of all that's happened."³ Vere, pitying Billy's youthful ignorance, tries to explain that "there's not much right. . . . Only necessity. You and Claggart broke man's compromise with good and evil, and both of you must pay the penalty." The Captain explains that it is better in life to steer "a middle course," that "when a man is born, he takes a guilt upon him, I can't say how or why. And life takes its revenge on those who hurt its pride with innocence." Vere explains that Claggart died willingly to see Billy die also, but that Billy can still foil Claggart's plan. "The world we breathe," says Vere, "is love and hatred both, but hatred must not win the victory." It is at this point that the fog in Billy's mind begins to lift and just in time for him to see the rocks and shoals which are as much a part of life as sunsets and gentle breezes. "I don't know, Captain," he replies. "I never was a hand to wonder about things, but now I think that maybe there's a kind of cruelty in people that's just as much a part of them as kindness, say, or honesty, or m-m-m . . . I can't find words, I guess, Captain" (p. 53). Vere explains to the puzzled youth that "we are all prisoners of deadly forms that are made to break us to their measure. Nothing," he adds, "has power to overcome them, except forgiveness. . . . Can you forgive what I have done?" Billy's forgiveness of Vere based on his new understanding and acceptance of the place of evil in the world gives him the intellectual growth necessary in a tragic hero. Though no philosopher, neither is Billy suffering any longer from a "canine intelligence."

3. Louis O. Coxé and Robert Chapman, *Billy Budd* (Princeton, New Jersey, 1951), p. 52.

Coxe and Chapman have not only excelled Melville in the characterization of Billy Budd but have also succeeded in dramatizing the ultimate victory of Good (Billy) over Evil (Claggart). Melville unconvincingly tells us that the memory of Good lives on infinitely in men's minds, as generations of sailors always remember Billy and save chips from the spar on which he was hanged. In the play, however, the audience is given a vivid illustration of the way love and forgiveness can overcome hate. It is a tense moment in the final scene when Seymour reads to the assembled crew the proceedings of the court-martial. The men become restive as they realize who is to be hanged and, swearing at their officers, threaten to mutiny. The ship's officers struggle to keep the crew in order, as Billy climbs up the ropes. The men shout at him to stop and are about to rush the deck to rescue him when Billy silences them by unexpectedly blessing their Captain. As the curtain comes down, all eyes are symbolically looking heavenward, focused on the disappearing figure of the protagonist.

Thus Coxe and Chapman have ended this morality play with brilliant finality of effect. They have dramatically illustrated the frustration of Claggart's subtle demonism. How Satan would have gloated if his death had resulted not only in Billy's fall but also the bloody massacre of the ship's crew and officers! He willingly died to bring about this catastrophe, only to have his plans foiled by the power of love and forgiveness. All this the playwrights have implied for a cultured audience with a taste for allegory mixed with realism. "We will look far," say the playwrights in their "Notes to the Play," "before we find another theme of equal interest or vitality" (p. 58). To this we might add that the American theater-going audience will have to look far to find a better contemporary intellectual drama.

ARNOLD L. GOLDSMITH

A STUDY IN AUTOHYPOCRISY: *MORTS SANS SÉPULTURE*

NONE OF THE LEGION of articles written about *Morts sans sépulture* since its first presentation in November, 1946, center around the presence—or lack—of bad faith in the various characters of the play. It is this lacuna that I shall attempt to fill.

Let us first define what is meant by "bad faith." In daily speech, the grocer who knowingly cheats his customers, but hides the lie with which he lives, is guilty of bad faith. In Sartrian terms, however, it is only when the grocer, hypnotized by his own trickery, begins to believe in his basic honesty, that he becomes guilty of bad faith. It is only when hypocrisy turns into autohypocrisy that bad faith in the Sartrian way sets in. This is the case of Egisthe in *Les Mouches*.

As all Sartrian plays, *Morts sans sépulture* is centered around one theme. In this case, it is duty. All the characters of the play have forgotten how to live. Instead, they "act" in a fashion dictated by their notion of their duty. This role, though self-imposed, destroys all subjectivity and brings about a state of utter bad faith.

Death is certain for all the characters, with the possible exception of Jean. Their actions, therefore, have only a very limited importance. There is no question of living well, only of dying well. They need only stick to their guns, that is to say, to remain true to themselves before their enemies. Jean, the underground leader, is the only one with a chance to survive. This fact gives importance to each of his actions, to each of his choices, for each choice will bring about another which, in turn, will create a third, and so on. These choices will show what he is, and what he is not. At his very first entrance, Jean tells us that, for him, only one thing counts: duty. All his words reflect this idea:

JEAN: J'espérais que vous étiez morts.

HENRI, *riant*: Nous avons fait de notre mieux.

JEAN: Je m'en doute. (p. 192)¹

This is not said in hatred. It is a precaution to protect the group. He feels safe, but the joy derived from this is not personal: being safe, he may go to warn the group when he is freed. Like his friends, Jean is entirely devoted, but with one difference: he will live. He feels this and, at that very instant, he senses that he is no longer as one with his friends. Even his mistress, Lucie, shrinks from him. He

1. The page numbers following the quotations refer to the edition of *Théâtre I* (Paris: Gallimard, 1947).

complains of this solitude, of the duties which will weigh upon him, and it is at that moment that François calls him "salaud." The importance of this insult is that it is François who hurls it, for it is he who is least imbued with bad faith. It is therefore safe to say that here, the word has a double meaning: the ordinary insult and the Sartrian expression. François feels this: "Regardez-le donc! Mais regardez-le donc! Le plus malheureux de nous tous. Il a dormi et mangé. Ses mains sont libres, il reverra le jour, il va vivre. Mais c'est le plus malheureux. Qu'est-ce que tu veux? Qu'on te plaigne? Salaud!" (p. 222). It is easy to see that, according to François, what should make Jean the happiest of men is this freedom, this tomorrow which destroys the gratuity of his acts and permits him to choose. Jean's only answer is to invite François to betray him. This betrayal would bring him to the level of his friends. But it is this very choice which separates him from his friends, and which will keep him separated. If he falls into the hands of the militia, that is to say, if he betrays himself or if he lets François betray him, he will do so by choice. Even his last act would be one of freedom, a choice, a decision which the others are not at liberty to make. It is this difference which separates them, and which no sacrifice will destroy.

This lack of choice, or rather this refusal to make a choice, this abandonment of his self to a role, this credo of his which absolves him from all choice—this is the cause of his bad faith; for, in accepting his role of chief, in letting himself be guided by duty, he becomes a thing, a being *en soi*. Instead of existing as a human being, he blames his milieu and the circumstances. Rather than recognizing that he is what he is as a result of free choice, he acts as if his destiny were fixed and as immutable as a stone. In refusing to act as an individual, he becomes imbued with bad faith.

Let us now look at the three militiamen. Clochet, whose influence in Darmand's office hangs over his friends like a sword of Damocles, is the most sadistic. Landrieu, the chief, and Pellerin hate and fear this influence. Pellerin has no regrets. Up to now, he has had his fun. Before the war, he was nothing. For four years, he has been someone with whom one had to reckon. He sees the end approaching but feels that it has all been worth while. He has made a choice; his present position is the result of that choice. His death will also be the result of that same choice. He blames no one. If he had a chance to turn back the clock, he would probably choose the same path. For Clochet, the case is quite different. Full of hatred which he is unable to direct toward anyone, he is terrified by the news—true or fabricated—of allied victories. This fear only intensifies his hatred. While Landrieu tortures a partisan to extract some bit of information, Clochet

does it out of pure pleasure. Pellerin, on the other hand, becomes sadistic only when he is put on the defensive, for it is then that he is made aware of his inferiority, as is the case when one of the tortured partisans mentions his studies to the relatively uneducated militiaman. Landrieu, more refined, less animalistic, is the reasoner of the group. Since one of the main contests between militiamen and partisans seems to be to see who will outlive whom, Landrieu uses this desire to his advantage: "Pour nous, ça se compte en mois: nous t'enterrerons. Fume. Et réfléchis" (p. 205). Psychological warfare which almost succeeds. When, at the end of the play, Landrieu promises a reprieve to the prisoners if they talk, the militiamen show their dissimilarities: Clochet, out of pure hatred, does not want them to escape death; Pellerin does not want the foes to outlive him, a survival that would destroy his temporary victory; Landrieu would rather turn them over to the Germans, an act which would free him from his job of executioner while still preserving his mental victory. Clochet, by ruse, has the prisoners executed, and all three militiamen sigh with relief. But even this reaction is prompted by different motives: Pellerin has outlived his enemies; Clochet has done the brutal job, and has done it well; Landrieu is freed from the dilemma of an unpleasant decision. From the point of view of bad faith, as seen in these three men, the most humane is also the most "salaud."

Let us return to the prisoners: Lucie, Canoris, François, Henri, and Sorbier. Sorbier is the first to leave the scene. He knows that he is going to die, and he is sure that he will break down under torture. To save his chief and his pride, he kills himself by jumping out of the window. His decision, however, is most gratuitous and of little value. He had a choice: to die before or after torture. The choice was not difficult. His last words, "je n'ai pas parlé," be they to encourage his friends or to show his defiance, add little to the significance of his choice.

François is the second victim. The youngest of the partisans, he is afraid of death, of torture, of Jean who is no longer in his world and, being afraid, he becomes dangerous to the life of the group. If he speaks—and he indicates that he will—all will be lost. To keep him silent, his friends kill him. But, blaming duty for his death, they refuse to acknowledge the choice as their own. In their minds, the situation, their duty, everything demands the death of François, and this removes all personal decision from their actions. François has been drawn into the Resistance by his sister Lucie. He knows that he is about to die, but dreads the torture that will precede death. Why suffer? Is it his fight? He begins to hate the Resistance which is causing his death and Jean who represents not only the cause of his

death but also of his torture. To betray him will be his revenge. It is a reaction that is natural enough, but it is prompted neither by duty nor by any other sense of belonging artificially imposed on his will. His decision, had he been allowed to realize it, would have been a free decision whose weight he would have shouldered readily.

Canoris and Henri can be analyzed together without further detriment to their already weak personalities. They, more than any other character in the play, are the incarnation of the selfless group member. Their lack of faith never leaves them. Henri more than Canoris, refuses to shoulder the weight of any choice. While under interrogation, he swaggers and swears not to cry out. He ends up by crying out, but does not accept this defeat as a personal one: "*Si nous parlons, nous avons tout perdu. Ils ont marqué des points parce que j'ai crié, mais dans l'ensemble nous ne sommes pas mal placés*" (p. 218). Even his actions become the actions of the group in his eyes: "*Vous l'avez tué avec mes mains!*" (p. 226). He never admits that any of his deeds, even that of speaking to save his life—which he believes of some use—could be the result of a personal decision. This last decision of his, moreover, is of no utility whatsoever, since the militiaman has promised him his life, but a very short life, for Henri and his friends will be turned over to the Germans. Henri tells himself that he will always be able to escape, but even he does not believe this last lie. The only purpose of his speaking is the escape from torture. Canoris is of the same caliber, perhaps even a shade worse since, as of the first scene, he is little more than a human wreck, without any hope for success as for his escape from the Germans. Nevertheless, he encourages Henri and Lucie to speak in order to gain a few precious moments of life.

In the last scenes, Lucie is more difficult to convince that they should not permit themselves to be killed. She has condoned the murder of her brother; she has been raped by the militiamen. To refuse to speak is to justify the murder and the rape. As she tells the two men, and especially Canoris, "*Coeur pur! Tu peux bien vivre, toi, tu as la conscience tranquille, ils t'ont un peu bousculé, voilà tout. Moi, ils m'ont avilie, il n'y a pas un pouce de ma peau qui ne me fasse horreur*" (p. 247). This disgust with herself is amplified by the inner shame due to Henri's action, "*Et toi, qui fais des manières parce que tu as étranglé un même, te rappelles-tu que ce même était mon frère et que je n'ai rien dit? J'ai pris tout le mal sur moi; il faut qu'on me supprime et tout ce mal avec*" (p. 247). The men answer with an accusation: only her pride makes her speak in this manner. When the militiamen are killed in a few months, their shame will die with them. This thought makes their submission more tenable. The ease with which Lucie lends herself to the facile suggestions of the two men is ridiculous in view of the violent diatribe against submission that she has just

delivered. In death, she has given a small victory to the militiamen. This victory is, of course, hollow, since the information given is false, but, at the moment of her death, Lucie, in the eyes of the militiamen, has lost. She has betrayed her most precious possession: herself; claiming duty as an excuse, she has freed herself from all culpability, refusing to be responsible for a choice which she claims has been forced on her. She has had her one great moment, her one moment of truth in which she sees herself in all her nudity, without the protection of the group, of duty, but that moment is of short duration.

In view of this, it can be safely said that all the characters of *Morts sans sépulture* are guilty of bad faith; but it must be admitted that those who most deserve the epithet "salaud" in the ordinary sense of the word, deserve it least in the Sartrean sense.

CLAUDE K. ABRAHAM

THE DRAMA OF DE FILIPPO

AT THE END OF WORLD WAR II the plays of Eduardo De Filippo, a Neapolitan writer, began to attract not only the audiences and readers in Italy but also those abroad. Eric Bentley¹ and Lander MacClintock² wrote briefly on him; and a few years ago Thornton Wilder³ stated that De Filippo was his favorite contemporary dramatic author.

Previously De Filippo had been known mainly as a comic actor whose plays were considered as vehicles for his acting. In fact, when in 1955 *Theatre Arts* devoted an issue to the Italian theater, he was treated chiefly as an actor.⁴ This is, however, no longer the case. After reading and studying his drama, one may well believe that a new voice and a great playwright has arisen. The *maschera* of a new Pulcinella has fallen, and the humor has turned to grave considerations of the problems of life, not only in Naples but also in the universe. As Pirandello forsook his Sicilian characteristics in favor of universal concepts, and as Di Giacomo left the Neapolitan environment for a wider world,⁵ so De Filippo progressed from presentations of local Neapolitan foibles to profound reflections on man's problems.

Like many contemporary writers, he has at times dealt with realistic topics of Naples during the occupation, and he has injected into his work a pathos seldom felt in other contemporary dramatic works. One thinks principally of his *Napoli milionaria* (*Naples Full of Millions*), and of some of the poetry from his *Il paese di Pulcinella* (*The Land of Pulcinella*). Through these works he made his contribution to post-war realism with a bitter, at times sarcastic, and always pathetic, humor. But what begins as realism becomes towards the end of the play a double reality, an illusion, or an untruth. Thus, a father who inveighs against the disrespectful behavior of today's youths, including his own son, suddenly loses his power of speech; but he only simulates his loss as a hopeless protest against modern society.⁶ Unlike the realism of Moravia, Vittorini, Marotta, Levi, Pavese, Pratolini, and other contemporary Italian authors known in America, De Filippo's realism is like that of Pirandello's: an excuse to evade realism itself. In fact, the truer De Filippo, both by natural propensity and by training, has always leaned toward the abstract, the illusional, and the metaphysical, as is evident from his short plays before World War II when his mind

1. *In Search of Theatre* (New York, 1953), pp. 281-95.

2. *The Age of Pirandello* (Bloomington, 1951), pp. 124-27.

3. In *College English*, Vol. XVII (Nov., 1955), 119. See moreover same (Dec., 1955), 164. Wilder's statement concerning the difficulty of translating De Filippo.

4. (May, 1955).

5. See my *S. Di Giacomo and Neapolitan Dialectal Literature* (New York, 1951), p. 133 ff.

6. *Mia famiglia* (1955) which was praised by Vito Pandolfi, "Un umorismo doloroso," in *Sipario* (March, 1956), 3.

was being formed in the school of Pirandello in whose troupe he was an actor, and from his recent works in which he has attained a far greater artistic skill.

This revival of Pirandellian influence on the Italian stage is duplicated in other countries, especially in France where the shadow of that modern master can be discerned to the extent that Lerminier recently wrote, "Pirandello est présent partout."⁷ His influence has been felt by such writers as Salacrou, Neveux, and even Camus. Among the Spaniards, at least two have imitated him: Alejandro Casona and Victor Iriarte.⁸

Italian critics have, of course, reminded De Filippo of that influence—an influence the Neapolitan playwright is reluctant to admit.⁹ When, in the summer of 1958, I told him that I saw Pirandellian traces in certain abstract, fantastic, and illusive situations, he seemed slightly annoyed. With a typical Neapolitan gesture of his hand, he called to my attention that such interpretations of the subjectivity of reality "are as old as Plato." Thus, he did not deny the similarity of themes or situations, but he denied that he imitates Pirandello. His is the same argument given by Casona¹⁰ when Casona was criticized for lack of originality in his plots and style. De Filippo is sincere and, moreover, correct in his assertion, as is Casona; otherwise we would have to accuse Pirandello, too, of having somewhat imitated writers like Sophocles, Cervantes, Calderón, and perhaps (although this may be difficult to see at first) the imaginative Ariosto. With such thoughts in mind I told the affable but pensive De Filippo that I considered that influence and similarity to be principally due to a natural affinity rather than a conscious imitation. He did not answer me, but was visibly pleased.

This Neapolitan writer has, then, treated subjects both of the realistic school and of the school of the subconscious. Realism in his case means what is commonly known to be Neapolitan in language and content. Some critics have even seen in him the traditional Neapolitan school; unfortunately, some of his clichés with farcical expressions and situations are indeed typical of dialectal *macchiette* and literature, but he is not the successor of Petito, the last of Pulcinellas.¹¹ In De

7. *Pensée française* (March, 1958), 59-61.

8. See A. Valbuena Prat, *Historia de la literatura española*, 4th Edition (Barcelona, 1953), Vol. III, p. 803.

9. See especially Corrado Alvaro, "Eduardo" in *Sipario* (March, 1956), 2; and Bentley, *In Search of Theatre*, p. 288. De Filippo told me personally that he agreed with Bentley's interpretation that such an influence "was simply nourished from the same sources, and interested in the same problems. . . ."

10. From his "Nota preliminar" in *La barca sin pescador* (Buenos Aires, 1951), p. 9. On this same topic see also Anatole France (*La Vie littéraire*), and more recently Giraudoux on the plot of his *Amphitryon*.

11. For the background of this tradition see MacClintock, *The Contemporary Drama of Italy* (Boston, 1920), pp. 201-05; for a very recent critical comment on the whole Neapolitan theater tradition in De Filippo, see Federico Frascari, *La Napoli amara di Eduardo De Filippo* (Firenze, 1958), pp. 13, 22-23, and *passim*. As this study goes to press two new books on De Filippo have appeared in 1959 and 1960 respectively: Gennaro Magliulo's, and G. B. De Sanctis'. This latest information comes from a well-known scholar: Joseph G. Fucilla.

Filippo's *Filumena Marturano*, Filumena is a prostitute who becomes a real woman because she also becomes a mother. But she is not the fragile Assunta Spina of Di Giacomo, nor an echo of other Neapolitan writers. If she is realistic, she is a realistic heroine in the sense of the French naturalistic or the Italian veristic school. Yet some writers and producers have interpreted the play as mirroring Neapolitan life.¹² Without denying the verity of some scenes of local color, one can assert that there is, however, little that is truly traditional or typically Neapolitan in this piece.

The play has been considered to be his masterpiece to date and a well-nigh perfect work. However, *Questi fantasmi*, *Napoli milionaria*, and *La grande magia* exhibit deeper sadness, emotion, and despair respectively. Filumena lacks true passion; she has no tragic or suffering moments. She has experienced hunger, humiliation, and prostitution, but it was all long before the play begins. Now she is bent on avenging her former life. She is entitled to such a revenge, but that fact itself and the fact that she is a strong-minded person, sure of the final outcome, tends to reduce the dramatic action of the play. Weak Amalia of *Napoli milionaria* is a more tragic, and, consequently, a more dramatic character. Only in Filumena's long speeches,¹³ resembling soliloquies because she is speaking mainly to herself as she recalls her youth and her later life, does one find a deep and human compassion which truly becomes art despite the sensational scene of the first act. This scene of simulated agony is similar to Gennaro's "death" in *Napoli milionaria*, and both are reminiscent of some traditional, farcical plays and *macchiette*. These scenes detract from De Filippo's art.

In *Filumena Marturano* one sees also, but only to a minor extent, the elusive, the unexpected, the unreal: Filumena's feigned moribund state just mentioned and her disclosure, after many years, that she is the mother of three children and that one of them is the son of Domenico, her lover and later her husband. Which one of the children is the husband's own? The mother refuses to let Domenico know, and the result is that if he is to be sure that he cherishes his own child he must cherish them all. But two out of three times he will be mistaken.

The originality of the plot as a whole must be recognized at this point as equaling the fertile imagination found in *Questi fantasmi* and *Napoli milionaria* which are De Filippo's most original plays.¹⁴

12. This play has been given all over Europe including Russia, and in South America; it was also given in New York City on October 26, 1956, at Lyceum Theater under the title *The Best House in Naples* and ended in a complete fiasco after a little more than a week. The actors spoke English with a strong foreign accent and they could not be understood; the translation by F. Hugh Herbert was really a free adaptation. Notice the title; the connection is obscure. For reviews and criticism: *New Yorker*, Nov. 3, 1956, 73-4; *Theatre Arts*, Jan., 1957, 20. For De Filippo's own comment see again Frascari, p. 130. The author, moreover, told me in Naples that Herbert's version had nothing of his own work; he approved it through a misunderstanding.

13. Those found toward the end of Act I and Act II.

14. As far as I know, no due credit has been given the author for this originality.

A true Neapolitan element in De Filippo of course exists, but it does not follow the traditional pattern; it is the every day happenings that he sees in his Naples during and after the war and it bears the unique stamp of the author. *Napoli milionaria* is a sarcastic title for a tragic plot which ends bitterly. Gennaro has become lost during a bombing raid by American planes and has wandered for a year. When he returns home he discovers that his wife has been unfaithful, his daughter is pregnant, and his son a thief; and all enriched through the black market. Gennaro, realizing that war destroys men and women even after the last shot has been fired, pitifully tells his repentant wife that the war is to blame for everything. Then he forgives all and offers his wife a cup of coffee. What a price to pay for the millions of *lire* his family had acquired during his absence! Hence, the bitter title: *Naples Full of Millions*. Gennaro, the real victim, forgives; and herein lies the tragedy, because war remains forever victorious, and humanity remains defeated and in a state of impotent resignation for unexpiated sins.

Many recent Italian writers have dealt remarkably well with war topics, including Moravia in his latest *La Ciociara* (*Two Women*); but *Napoli milionaria* possibly remains the post-war human epic of Italian literature: it is unsurpassed for its poignant and striking pathos which creates an unparalleled mood of powerlessness and human pity as exemplified by the last scene. It must have made many Neapolitans and non-Neapolitans alike weep silently with guilty eyes amidst the many "ruins" of war.

It can be seen that we encounter here a dramatist who for once is devoid of paradoxical, or neurasthenic situations. His Naples is a pitiful city, a Naples which was defeated twice, once by the enemy and once by her own people. Here the Neapolitan playwright shows his love for his city, not with a hyperbolic, melodious Neapolitan song but with ironic and subdued bitterness. He has noticed everything and has wept in the penumbra of a Naples that was: the *Napoli nobilissima*, the Siren of the Tyrrhenian Sea, the Capital of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, the Capital of the World of Songs, and the Naples Full of Millions.¹⁵

The greater part of De Filippo's theater is given, as has been stated, to mental and abstract themes reminiscent of Pirandello but blended with the author's unmistakable, personal style and more genuine humor. The works in which the author ventures deepest into the abyss of the subconscious and the metaphysical are the plays, *Questi fantasmi* (*These Ghosts*), *La grande magia* (*The Magic Performance*), *Le voci di dentro* (*The Voices From Within*), and the poem *Vincenzo De*

15. This is not the Naples of Neapolitan "popular tradition" to which Bentley, Frascani, and Pandolfi (*Il dramma* [May, 1948], 8) refer, which in the end becomes literary tradition. These critics perhaps confuse the actor and his Neapolitan mime with the playwright and his genius. This is a new, contemporary Naples.

Pretore. All have been written since the end of the war but the war is conspicuously absent.

In *La grande magia* Calogero finds refuge in an illusion, as it were, in the emergence of his subconscious. A magician makes his wife disappear, and in front of all the people watching the performance he gives the husband a little box which he is told contains his wife. His wife aided by the magician during the act has run away with her lover. Calogero believes or forces himself to believe that she is in that box which, however, he does not dare to open. The alternative to this belief or faith is to realize the truth and to react brutally as did Othello and Don Gutierre.¹⁶ One may perish in the anguish that reality brings; for reality must be confronted or changed. Othello, for example, met it; Calogero following the traces of Enrico IV changes it. This is a modern solution.

Actually, illusion and reality do not contradict each other as is commonly believed; rather, they fuse to form that dual reality which saves some people from utter destruction. That is why the box is not really empty: it contains a reality, a faith. If the little box does not, nor could not, contain Calogero's wife, nevertheless it holds his firm hope and a real illusion which destroys the hard facts of life. Like Ponza in *Così è (se vi pare)*, and like Enrico in *Enrico IV*, Calogero is not insane; he pretends, as one must pretend and at the same time believe. That box, then, has taken the place of someone, something in his pathological and painful state of mind, and is his *summa ratio* for forcibly believing.

Don Quijote also believed in an illusion, but when it ceased to be a fantasy and he realized the truth, he died. Enrico IV also realizes at a certain moment his true situation, but unlike Don Quijote he chooses to go back to that variable reality as a lasting though painful escape. Calogero likewise remains steadfast in his illusion as did Enrico IV and also Ponza. With Pirandello and De Filippo, reality vanishes into simulation.

The play takes on quite often classical and universal overtones. In it the world of the characters encompasses the illimitable cosmos of the mind, and the author soars on the wings of metaphysics to a battleground where the mind and the heart conflict. The mind must believe what is not true because it fears that otherwise reality will break the heart. If the heart knows, it feels . . . and dies. Therefore, the mind attempts to deceive the heart which pretends to believe. Naturally, it merely pretends because, as the proverb says, and as the Neapolitans know it most particularly, *the heart is never mistaken and cannot be deceived* (*Il cuore non si inganna mai*). The mind, on the other hand,

16. See *El médico de su honra* by Calderón, and notice the similarity of its plot with *Othello*.

is finally convinced by its own illusion, and is convinced that the heart does not know. Only by following such a course can the mind save itself from total disintegration. The heart and the mind form then a state of semi-consciousness in which the heart secretly and softly weeps while the bombastic mind pitifully boasts.

Thus Calogero in the last scene refuses to recognize his returning, wayward wife; and when she openly admits her betrayal so that he can leave his "mad illusion," he exclaims: "What have you done?" betraying his "madness" if only for a second. But it is exactly here that we encounter the art which makes the play also human and heartfelt, not mental and evanescent. There is veiled in the background a heart pulsating with reality that makes illusion truly painful because the illusion is based on something true: it is sensitive to a subconscious reality that hurts. The mind becomes a true actor on the stage while the human soul or heart remains backstage. Therefore, the illusion is sincere but not totally beguiling; and pain and sorrow remain somewhat distant and ecstatic as if in a trance, yet ever present in that very unreality. This is De Filippo's art.

La grande magia, the play that reflects Pirandellian influence more than any other of De Filippo's works, also shows the defects found in Pirandello. There is artificiality in some of the situations and in the style itself. The dialogue is forced and lacks spontaneity, but the play remains an impressive work nonetheless.

I consider *Questi fantasmi* De Filippo's best play and am supported in this conclusion by the author himself. When I asked him point blank which play he considered his greatest work, I had expected some hesitation. But Eduardo, as he is affectionately called in Italy, promptly answered, "*Questi fantasmi*."¹⁷

In this pathetic and, at times, humorous play we have the naïve situation of a man who believes in ghosts. It seems like a medieval legend, but it takes place today in Naples. Like Calogero, Pasquale of *Questi fantasmi* saves himself from actual tragedy because he can think that his wife's lover is a ghost who haunts his house and benevolently leaves him money. The height of the irony occurs when Pasquale welcomes the ghost into his home and when he accepts the ghost's money in order to be able to buy little things for his wife, Maria, whom he loves.

Pasquale is not as dramatic a personality as Calogero armed with a little, "empty" box is; he is a man who is happy in his own fashion because he is able to delude himself. Neither is he the epic Gennaro who painfully but resignedly accepts dishonor. Pasquale will never

17. Silvio D'Amico had already highly praised both De Filippo and this particular play, and MacClintock (*The Age* p. 124) reports that that foremost drama critic considered this play the best in Italy since 1920.

know the truth, and his young wife thinking that he ignores her lover for the sake of money considers him to be a coward and detests him all the more.¹⁸ We know the truth and it is we who suffer. Thus, once again we have a prismatic reality; for if Pasquale does not attain to a metaphysical make-believe, he nevertheless believes, like Calogero, in something that is not. He, too, is surrounded by a world of fiction, or perhaps even of fairytale. In this sense De Filippo solves the problems posed by reality in an innocent and novel way: he enables Pasquale to believe in ghosts. This is an original device totally free of Pirandello's artistry.

Pirandellian influence is discernible only in the scene where Armida, the abandoned wife of Maria's lover, appears with her children who, having been badly taken care of, truly resemble ghosts. Here it is apparent that the source for this scene is *Six Characters in Search of an Author*; and the language used lends definite credence to this opinion. The scene itself, however, has a different significance with a tenderness and grief not found in the play of the Sicilian writer. The poor and unfortunate Armida is in a nervous frenzy and one of her children has a terrible, ugly tic which his neurotic mother cannot bear. Is any one of them to blame? Interrupting her neurasthenic speech, the mother orders the child to stop, but the child cannot and repeats the automatic action. The mother gives the child a resounding slap in the face. The child staggers . . . and we with him.

Pasquale is a major creation whose soul is like that of a child. When he talks to his wife he is convinced that what he does is right, and that "he knows his business." These words acquire a different meaning in the poisoned mind of Maria. The result is a double talk that hurts the reader who knows the truth while she continues to scorn her husband. Pasquale, too, becomes epic and classical like Gennaro and Calogero but in a different sense. He does not even suspect that he might be a hero; he is indeed not that kind of protagonist. He is a person who defies time and does not grow old. He is a poet with an innocent, pure imagination whom Vico would have appreciated. In this drama the double side of reality has taken a holiday (except for the reader).

Finally, in the play none of the characters knows the truth, except towards the very end when the "ghost" alone realizes what has happened and leaves forever. Because of this situation we have a different type of tragic play. Pasquale remains a satisfied, rather happy person. He even hopes the "ghost" will come back at some other time to bring him more money. Maria is not repentant or grief-stricken like Amalia

18. It is to be noted that Pasquale is not Ciampa of Pirandello's *Il berretto a sonagli* who rebels against his wife's infidelity only when he knows that others too have learned of her conduct. A touch of this behavior can be found elsewhere in De Filippo: in *Libero* of *Le bugie con le gambe lunghe* when Graziella suggests that they get married (Act I).

because she continues to believe her husband is a coward; consequently, she still feels she is justified in her betrayal. Thus, the truly tragic element does not exist for the characters: not for a cynical Maria, not for an ignorant Pasquale. Yet the tragedy of the drama does exist; it exists among the spectators in the theater or within the readers in their own rooms. The author has placed all of us in the play, but after the last curtain falls—a most disturbing and poignant role. But we know the truth; and it is not easy for us to pretend, nor can we believe in spirits. Tragedy, then, is transferred to the spectator or to the reader as Pasquale happily ends the play pocketing the ghost's money. Then the playwright himself seems to appear on the stage or in our room with an ambiguous smile to tell us: "Choose now: Calogero or Gennaro?"

Once again then, this is not the characteristic Naples of Viviani, F. Russo, Bovio, Serao, or even of Di Giacomo or Bracco.¹⁹ It is not the veristic Naples of the *camorristi* (gangsters), or the lyrical city of the famous "O sole mio." This is an intellectual, fantastic Naples with no local color. It is a city steeped now in universal, tragic, and human concepts; a Naples with artistic, dramatic qualities that joins the new Neapolitan world of Salvatore Di Giacomo with its highly poetical horizon.

De Filippo realizes all this when he states in his poetry²⁰ that what he writes is not comical—an adjective stamped on things Neapolitan since the *gliommeri*²¹ and the *farse cavaiole* of the late Renaissance period. Indeed, with the first poem in *Il paese di Pulcinella* he introduces his reader to his poetry sullenly remarking that people have not understood him. People laugh when they meet him remembering his "funny" plays; but he asks, "Is it a laughing matter when I portray comical situations arising from everyday life?" Then answering his own question: "I don't think so." In another poem the poet again takes his reader to task, counseling him not to look at the calendar to tell one's age. Regardless of what the calendar says, life lasts but one year; after that year all that remains is superfluous. "And suddenly it is night" (*Ed e' subito sera*), as Quasimodo says.

De Filippo's Neapolitan language reflects the mood or tone of the content or plot. It is the true dialect when Naples and its people are the protagonists, becoming soft, mellow, and humorous; it becomes Italian or very close to it when the subject matter calls for a loftier expression, as in the plays dealing with unreality. It is not Olympian or classical as in Pirandello, but warmer and mellow. Very often,

19. For these writers see F. Flora, "Poeti napoletani," in *Pegaso* (Dec., 1929), 339-49; A. Tilgher, *La poesia dialettale napoletana* (Roma, 1920); or Maurino, pp. 157-72.

20. See his *Il paese di Pulcinella* (Naples, 1951). For a rapid, critical view of Neapolitan poets since World War II, including De Filippo's poetry, see my article, "Neapolitan Poetry," in *Books Abroad* (Fall, 1955).

21. Even the great Sannazaro wrote *gliommeri* in the Neapolitan dialect.

it is a fresh, natural, and melodious Italian with Neapolitan constructions and nuances. When I asked De Filippo why he so often employed standard Italian rather than dialect he replied that because of the radio, the movies, and television the Neapolitans are increasingly speaking the standard language. But can it be that the author is conscious of his themes and motives and wants to be sure he will reach the whole Italian people at a higher level?

Thus, De Filippo has left his beautiful Naples which he nevertheless truly loves; his dramatic art involves him now in deeper, wider problems in the realm of the mind and conscience. He is concerned with the problems which have occupied the minds and the hearts of great dramatists who have tried to portray the agonizing souls of characters searching for a solution to alleviate their sorrows—Sophocles was concerned with the agony of immovable Fate; Shakespeare with the grief of man or kings. The solution at times is a world of illusion as in Cervantes who created a poetical mirage as an escape; as in Calderón de la Barca who fused life with dream, or as in Pirandello who interpreted life with a bitter compassion, so painful that it must flee to the realm of the intellect. Man has often felt the vacuum that stark reality produces, and through such writers as the foregoing he has attempted to penetrate the mystery of the mind and of the heart. Such an attempt can fuse, not confuse, dream with reality.

Eduardo De Filippo has joined in his own manner this lofty company, and he is still writing.

FERDINANDO D. MAURINO

THE PSYCHOANALYZING OF EUGENE O'NEILL

PART TWO

IN THIS SURVEY of the reputation of O'Neill as a psychoanalytical dramatist during the quarter century from about 1925 to about 1950, as reflected in the relatively brief treatments allowed in play and book reviews, in magazine articles, and in chapters of books on larger subjects, it should have become rather painfully evident that the majority of his critics felt that his capture by the school of "modern psychology," conscious or unconscious, had not, with some provocative exceptions, eventuated in his improvement as a playwright. But few of these critics had the space or perhaps the desire to go at all comprehensively into the subject. Only one critic between Miss Sparrow in 1930 and Mr. Engel and Miss Falk in the fifties took the trouble to do so. In two sections in his 1941 book, *Intellectual America*, entitled "The Primitives" and "The Freudians," but especially in the latter, Oscar Cargill offered some new and well-developed ideas on the presence of psychoanalytical material in O'Neill's plays. In the case of *The Great God Brown* he broke with the run of Freudian critics in maintaining that "Jung, rather than Aeschylus, illuminates" the play. In the Jungian psychology, he explained, the mask represents the *persona* or face that the Conscious offers to the world, with a corresponding mask for the Unconscious. Thus O'Neill showed the duality of his characters with their masks. But the masking and unmasking of the actors became so complicated that "the spectator, rather than the actor, needs a prompt book—an interlinear one (filled out from Jung) in order that he may understand the play." Granting that the assumptions of character were reasonable if one knew his new psychology, Cargill admitted that even

if the analytical psychology of Jung is totally discarded, there yet remains a considerable interest in *The Great God Brown*, for the observation that we are all aliens to each other is an immutable fact. . . . The fact that all types of Anthony, artists and mystics, are generally regarded by the American public and their own families as immature children is so just a stricture of the national intelligence that one regrets it is lost in the Freudian labyrinth of this play where only the Freudian archeologist and excavator can dig it out. *The Great God Brown* in some respects is an excellent social tract, just as, in others, it is a poor play. . . .¹⁸

18. Cargill, p. 698.

In his laudatory treatment of *Lazarus Laughed* Cargill also stressed Jung and Nietzsche as well as Freud. "With utter contempt to the naysayers we may pronounce *Lazarus Laughed* as much superior to all other dramatic conceptions in its day as were *Faust*, *Hamlet* and *Oedipus Rex*" in theirs. Cargill decided that O'Neill had improved on the naming of his types of personalities over Jung's in his *Psychological Types*. Here O'Neill had reworked Jung's seven types—" (1) The Simple, Ignorant; (2) the Happy, Eager; (3) the Self-Tortured, Introspective; (4) the Proud, Self-Reliant; (5) the Servile, Hypocritical; (6) the Revengeful, Cruel; and (7) the Sorrowful, Resigned"—into his Judean, Athenian, and Roman crowds. Thus, Cargill felt, O'Neill had transcended the formulas of Jung to create this "theatrical masterpiece, one of the touchstones in dramatic art." But Cargill also saw "The Birth of Tragedy" reflected in the play:

To us *Lazarus Laughed* seems a better "tragedy" in the Nietzschean sense—a better combination of form and rhythm, of dreams and drunkenness, of the Apollonian and the Dionysian—than anything the philosopher cites. Undoubtedly the germinal idea for the play is Nietzsche's observation that "all the celebrated figures of the Greek Stage—Prometheus, Oedipus, etc., are but masks of this original hero, Dionysus."

Moreover, said Cargill, O'Neill was like both Nietzsche and Freud in denying the existence of evil and protesting that "there are only sickness and health," but unlike Nietzsche O'Neill had given to his "Dionysus" some Christian attributes, such as a belief that "Love is man's hope—love for life on earth." Nevertheless, in spite of his admiration for much of O'Neill's work, Cargill speculated that perhaps the playwright had made use of his Freudian psychology partly to whet the jaded appetites of the playgoers of the "flaming twenties."¹⁹

Although a determination of the extent of the psychoanalytical factor in the plays of O'Neill was not the primary purpose of Edwin A. Engel in *The Haunted Heroes of Eugene O'Neill* in 1953, very early in the book the author began to analyze many of the characters in psychoanalytical terms as a matter of course without even bothering to establish O'Neill's interest in or knowledge of the subject. Captain Keeney in *Ile* "is the victim of an obsessive compulsion." He is "moved on with a push by his monomania." In *Beyond the Horizon* O'Neill had failed "to illuminate the central fact—the impingement of harsh objective reality upon the introverted hero." In *Where the Cross Is Made*, Captain Bartlett in his "obsession" is unwilling to distinguish between fact and dream, and acts only in accordance with a sort of "wish-fulfillment." The play, said Engel, reveals only "a dilute concern with formal psychopathology," for

19. *Ibid.*, pp. 700–701.

"it is evident that O'Neill's convictions about abnormality are not quite identical with those of the psychiatrist who would diagnose the affliction of the two mad men as schizophrenia." Thereupon Engel proceeded to produce what he called justification "for what appears to be an excessive loyalty to morbidity" in O'Neill by citing "various philosophies which flourished around 1900 and in the drama itself." These philosophies included the pragmatism of William James, the *Ecce Homo* of Nietzsche, the *Philosophy of As If* by Vaihinger, and the views of Freud, who "pointed out the wish-fulfillment content of dreams; explained reality in terms of pain-avoidance; revealed the universality of neurosis and psychosis which, although concealed, are nevertheless present in a quantitative sense." Examples in the drama were Ibsen and Pirandello. Consequently, thought Engel, in *Where the Cross Is Made*, "the baleful aspects of psychopathology were attenuated by seeing in one of its common symptoms a comforting, even a life preserving, property." But in *Gold*, the expanded form of the *Cross* in 1920, O'Neill introduced "such new material as to make mental morbidity identifiable as such to himself as well as to a psychiatrist. . . . The long play is concerned not only with the antithesis of dream and reality but also with the conflict between the 'sustaining lie' and the moral conscience." Engel concluded his discussion of this early play with a further application of the conflict between the motif of "wish-fulfillment" versus the "reality principle."²⁰

In his discussion of *Diff'rent* Engel expanded his group of the new psychologists of the day by quoting William James on the "wonderful explorations by Binet, Janet, Breuer, Freud, Mason, Prince, and others of the subliminal consciousness of patients with hysteria" and their revelations of "whole systems of underground life."²¹ Similarly, in discussing *The Theatre of Tomorrow* by Kenneth Macgowan, whom O'Neill had met at Provincetown, in connection with *The Hairy Ape*, Engel quoted Macgowan to the effect that the play of tomorrow "will attempt to transfer to dramatic art the illumination of those deep and vigorous and eternal processes of the human soul which the psychology of Freud and Jung has given us through the study of the unconscious, striking to the heart of emotion and linking our life today with the emanations of the primitive racial mind." Referring to George Cram Cook's perception of the usefulness of psychoanalytical material for satirical comedy, in his collaboration with Susan Glaspell on *Suppressed Desires*, Engel pointed out that Macgowan "discovered in Freudian psychology precisely what Cook had been searching for in serious drama."²²

Only after he had written eighty pages of his book, interlarded with

20. Engel, pp. 19, 21, 23-25.

21. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-35.

22. *Ibid.*, p. 70.

the preceding references to psychoanalysis, did Engel finally come to a historical survey of the subject itself in America. After discussing various anticipations of modern psychoanalysis by Nietzsche (who was acclaimed by Havelock Ellis, Shaw, Mencken, Huneker, Clark, and others) and Wagner, Engel recalled how Freud himself had admitted that the "guesses and intuitions" of Nietzsche "often agree in the most astonishing way with the laborious findings of psychoanalysis." Engel then came to the situation in America, pointing out that although Freud made his "first important contribution in 1900, the year of Nietzsche's death," he did not come to the attention of the layman, "particularly the Greenwich Villager and the colonist of Provincetown," until after the publication of the translation of his *Traumdeutung* in 1913.

Already known for his sensational theories pertaining to dream symbolism, sexual repression, the Oedipus complex, and the clinical procedure of free association, Freud published *Totem and Taboo*, a study of the origin of religion and morality, revealing therein to American readers in 1918 his interest in the mythical, precultural, primeval, as well as the psychological. Meanwhile it was evident that Freud's former disciple, Carl Jung, was displaying a similar preoccupation. For in 1917 [*sic*] *The Psychology of the Unconscious* was published in this country. By 1921 both psychologists had their adherents even outside the Village. Macgowan, the rare exception, seemed to find virtue in both Freud and Jung. . . .

At this point Engel quoted the significant passages from O'Neill's letter to Clark on his knowledge of the two psychologists, but evidenced some skepticism as to the acceptability of the playwright's explanation:

Despite his disclaimer, the hidden motives which he revealed began, about 1923, to bear a curious resemblance to those which had been discovered not only in the work of Freud and Jung, but also in that of Adler. Whatever his inspiration, he began, too deliberately perhaps, to write the "special sort of naturalism that develops into the mythical."²³

In this way the name of the third most important member of the early psychoanalytical triumvirate, Alfred Adler, was rather casually introduced into the controversy. But Engel soon returned to his intimation of this third influence in his analysis of Jim Harris and Ella Downey, the protagonists of *All God's Chillun Got Wings*. Contrasting Jim with the Dreamy Kid and Brutus Jones, Engel asserted:

Still affected by his racial past the Negro now, however, owing to the revision of O'Neill's primitivistic theories, is spared the fate which befell his predecessors of the earlier plays. The concept of atavism has been discarded and with it the Negro's rightful, savage

23. *Ibid.*, pp. 76-82. On pp. 84-85 Engel also discusses with some skepticism O'Neill's disclaimer of having been influenced by the Expressionists and his distaste for them.

ancestors. Now he can boast of a rich, primitive racial heritage. Having progressed along anthropological lines O'Neill's thought also moved into the psychological milieu of the 1920's. Motivation of the principal characters . . . was influenced by the teachings of Alfred Adler who, incidentally, was less inclined than Freud to emphasize man's animal tendencies. . . . Neither the Dreamy Kid nor Brutus Jones would remotely have comprehended the nature of Jim's suffering, nor would the sea-captains whose compulsive drives and haunted minds represented psychological abnormalities of a quite different order. . . . Jim, in short, is the victim of a neurosis, the origin of which lay, not in the conflict between "ego and sexuality," . . . which is Freud's theory, but within the ego itself, which is the theory of Adler, one of Freud's dissident disciples. Emphasizing the ego rather than the "libido," Adler insisted that the well-spring of human behavior is not that of sexual energy, but rather of a force akin to Nietzsche's will to power. . . .

The case of Ellen Downey may also be explained in part by Adler's "individual psychology."

Consequently, after a lengthy dissection, Engel concludes: "The psychology of the two main characters, obliquely influenced as it appears to be by the theories of Adler, succeeds in avoiding those animal cravings and instincts which appeared in *The Emperor Jones* and in *The Hairy Ape*."²⁴

Desire Under the Elms, however, according to Engel, brought O'Neill back to Freud and Jung. Here the Oedipus complex, which of course had revealed itself in literature long before Freud, appeared for the first time in O'Neill. But after 1910, "when Freud was beginning to receive the attention of the layman as well as of the psychiatrist," it appeared with "grim regularity" in literature. Finding it impossible to decide whether O'Neill's interest in it came from the removal of his inhibitions "so that he dared to hold the mirror up to his own inner life," from his direct reading of Freud, from a circuitous approach such as *Sons and Lovers* or the German Expressionistic drama, or from a simple soaking up of "such psychological commonplaces," Engel was certain that to anyone as interested as O'Neill was in Greek tragedy and the nature of religion, "the theories of both Freud and Jung should have been of inestimable interest." Recurring to *Totem and Taboo*, Engel recalled how Freud, reconstructing the "conditions of the primal horde, . . . described a rebellion of the sons against the violent primal father who stood in the way of their sexual demands and of their desire for power," and later modeled their idea of god on this father-son relationship. But at the same time the sons also loved and admired this father whom they hated. Applying these ideas to the play, Engel concluded:

Eben Cabot's repeated plaintive appeal to his Maw is the earliest indication that O'Neill was to enlist the services of the Mother in

24. *Ibid.*, pp. 117-26, *passim*.

the struggle against the Father and against God. In this project Jung, among others, seems to have been especially helpful. If the Swiss psychiatrist incurred the deep displeasure of Freud, he earned the gratitude of such people as assert the coexistence, if not the pre-eminence, of the spirit. . . . His assignment of the predominant role in the instinctual and spiritual world to the mother rather than to the father should have been particularly appealing.

Engel then ended by listing some of the "signs to Jung of the presence of a universal wish to enter the mother's womb a second time and be born again."²⁵

Some of these ideas of the Mother—the Earth Mother—O'Neill introduced as a major aspect of *The Great God Brown*, though Engel did not make as much of the Jungian basis as might have been expected. Instead, he began by discussing the devastating effect of neo-Puritanism on American life and culture of the 1920's, citing Van Wyck Brooks, H. L. Mencken, Randolph Bourne, Waldo Frank, and others as leading the rebellion. "Supplementing Nietzsche with Freud, [Bourne] argued that the primitive currents of life [in the Puritan] are not blocked and turned back on their sources, but are directed into profound and usually devastating channels. . . ." Frank "referred not only to the repressed psychic life of the pioneer but also—invoking Jung—to his 'passionate extraversion.'" Engel, however, in his analysis of O'Neill's "version of the artist's predicament" in this play, dwelt on Nietzsche, supplemented by the Temptation of St. Anthony as the chief inspirations rather than on Freud and Jung.²⁶

Strange Interlude pursued O'Neill's views on the Father-God versus the Mother-God still further, but Engel devoted most of his discussion of this play to a careful discrimination between what is Freudian and what is non-Freudian in it. O'Neill's attitude, he concluded, is ambivalent. Though Nina's neurosis and her relationship with her father suggested a Freudian influence, especially in the way in which they followed Freud's doctrine of the frequency with which "hystericals and neurotics continue to be strongly affected by painful experiences from the distant past, neglecting present reality," the intrusion of Darrell's "meddling" suggested also that O'Neill did not intend to make a "Freudian tract" of the play. This fact Engel thought was proved by O'Neill's making a neurologist of Darrell at the beginning instead of a psychoanalyst (noting, of course, Marsden's initial mental comment on "Herr Freud") and then turning him into a biologist at the end.

In short, O'Neill's position with respect to psychoanalysis is an equivocal one. On the one hand it enriched his knowledge of psy-

25. *Ibid.*, pp. 132-34.

26. *Ibid.*, pp. 152-55.

chopathology and confirmed his earlier conclusions regarding man's irrational and primitive nature. . . . It contributes a pat but superficial tone to the play in the references to neurosis, in Darrell's jargon, in Marsden's Oedipus complex, and in the doubtful Freudian interior monologues.

On the other hand, in transforming Darrell into a "pure" scientist at the end, O'Neill "shut the door in the analyst's face" and at the same time gave himself

the opportunity to make frequent deprecatory statements concerning the value of science in matters of religion, the search for truth, and life generally. Insofar as psychoanalysis may be considered a science (its method, at least, may be considered empirical) it shares with biology O'Neill's contempt.

As for Nina, who eventually becomes "a symbol of the American 'Everywoman'" of today, her "anguish is substantially the same anguish that had afflicted O'Neill's pre-Freudian, and less obviously Freudian, characters; and its roots spread under all of *Strange Interlude*."²⁷

Engel's approach to *Mourning Becomes Electra*, so far as psychoanalysis is concerned, was surprisingly fragmentary. Commencing with O'Neill's admission in his notes that he wanted to write a modern psychological drama using a Greek legend plot, Engel asserted briefly that the playwright "drew heavily upon the theories of both Freud and Jung." Comparing the Greek treatment of the Electra theme with that of various moderns, Engel contented himself with dropping in a few Freudian reminders here and there. "If Freud could trace the beginning of religion and morality to the slaying by the sons of the primordial father, O'Neill could seek it in the murder of the primordial mother." As for Orin's Oedipus complex and his temporary identification of himself with his father, Engel remarked: "What the Freudian psychologist detects in Orestes' disapproval of Clytemnestra's affair with Aegisthus, O'Neill made blatantly explicit in his play." Again, "Where Aeschylus took the father's side . . . O'Neill, with the support of modern psychology, took the mother's side. . . ." Again, "That Christine's killing of her husband is adequately motivated, no Freudian would deny." Finally, calling attention to the presence in *Mourning Becomes Electra* of "its spiritual malaise, its Freudian machinery, its selfconscious symbolism, its Gothic properties, its turgid style," Engel disagreed emphatically with both Krutch and Nathan in their ranking of the play as one of the finest in the modern American theater.²⁸

Then, according to Engel's scheme, came a brief new period in O'Neill's writing. "Unable to cheer himself up, O'Neill sank, as he told Nathan in the early 1930's, into 'a bog of tedium and life-sickness.'

27. *Ibid.*, pp. 212-13.

28. *Ibid.*, pp. 246, 249, 251, 252, 253, 258, 259.

Destitute of faith and terrified with skepticism, he experienced the corollary predicament—a contempt for life and a dread of death. . . .” The result was *Days Without End* and *Ah, Wilderness!* Yet, within less than five years after he had written them, he called them an “interlude.”

Resembling the state of euphoria which accompanies the completion of a successful psychoanalysis, the “mood of optimism and faith that . . . supplanted his old, indurated pessimism and disillusion,” followed, for one thing, the dissolution of the marital trouble. . . . And if *Electra* cleansed his emotions, it also depleted the psychological and mythical possibilities of the universal drama of life and death.

Days Without End, felt Engel, showed how close O'Neill, in the guise of John Loving, came to reconversion to the church, inasmuch as he “confessed his sins not in the customary form of the agonized soliloquy but in the presence of a priest.” Up to the final scene, however, Loving “not only typifies the twentieth century renegade, he is the composite O'Neill hero, . . . as well as O'Neill himself.” He has “read all sorts of scientific books,” has taken up a “rationalistic attitude,” has become an atheist and skeptic, and is “characterized by impulses to self-destruction, by hatred of life, by obsession with death.” But Engel could not bring himself to agree with Richard Dana Skinner, who was gratified to see how O'Neill, in his “pilgrimage from turmoil to peace,” had entered “the third stage—that of Emergence, following the periods of Turmoil and Regression.” He agreed rather with Nathan, who had pronounced that *Days Without End* was not only one of O'Neill's poorest plays, but “one of the dullest that has come to the more ambitious stage in some time.”²⁹

Next O'Neill, having thus renounced “his own follies of the preceding couple of decades,” took a look back upon these follies “as amusing aberrations of a sensitive, earnest adolescent” when he wrote *Ah, Wilderness!* with its “jolly Millers.” Years later, O'Neill confirmed the “wish-fulfillment character of the play” when he confessed, “That's the way I would have liked my boyhood to have been. . . . It was a sort of wishing out loud.” Consequently, Engel summed up, “there is no problem of existence; no fighting of life or fear of death; no probing of hidden motives; no unfulfilled longings, neuroses, or obsessions; no father-son hostility, mother fixation, or marital difficulty. . . .”³⁰

This new and happier period, however, was very brief. In 1937 O'Neill wrote to Barrett Clark: “. . . For, noting the way the world wags, I am sure that Man has definitely decided to destroy himself, and this seems to me the only truly wise decision he has ever made!” But before *The Iceman* came in 1946 only his closest friends knew that “his respite in faith and euphoria had ended long since.” In the interim he had

29. *Ibid.*, pp. 263–64, 266, 268, 270.

30. *Ibid.*, pp. 269–270.

destroyed all but one of the plays he had begun in his projected cycle of nine, but had completed two non-cycle plays, *The Iceman Cometh* and *A Moon for the Misbegotten*. In *The Iceman* the characters, as Engel saw them, "belonged" to nothing: "neither to Pan nor Christ, the cell nor the universe; the womb nor the hearth." There was "neither poignant yearning nor feverish quest. In this painless purgatory, not love and peace, but peace alone is the central human need." Previously O'Neill had proposed three ways to this peace: dream, drunkenness, and death. In *Electra* he had suggested that death might be a means of escape to the peace of the Mother. This conception he now regarded as a "pipe dream" and found only hate and death remaining.

Lonely, haunted, guilt-ridden, young Parritt is the recurrent type of O'Neillian son of a dead mother, recalling Eben Cabot, Dion Anthony, Charlie Marsden, Reuben Light, Orin Mannon. Among these Orin incurred the deepest guilt by being responsible for his mother's death. Yet he loved his mother, whereas Parritt hates his, a fact which intensifies his feeling of guilt.

Many of the other characters in the play have this guilt feeling, though for some reason Engel does not call it a "guilt-complex." And he ends his discussion: "*The Iceman Cometh* is O'Neill's valediction. It brings to a climactic conclusion the death-peace theme of *Mourning Becomes Electra*, its actual predecessor; and it is followed only by the feeble pale *Moon for the Misbegotten*."³¹

After having thus stimulatingly examined O'Neill's *opera* and diagnosed them individually, Engel came to his recapitulation, couched partially in terms of the "new psychology."

As for the universal, he saw especially to that: the abiding theme of his plays was the struggle between life and death, the clash of faith and skepticism, the conflict of illusion and reality—the major theme was metamorphosed into a compulsive preoccupation: the maintenance of an equilibrium between life-sickness and death-fear.

Love O'Neill identified as the prime component of faith and found it equally elusive and illusory. . . . Human relationships, individual as well as social, were almost invariably discordant. Suffering, among other things, from excessive self-consciousness, O'Neill's heroes, at odds with society, sought the remoteness of the cosmos, the privacy of the womb, the anonymity of the grave. In their neurotic self-obsession they remained indifferent to the suffering of other men while bravely avowing their love for Man. . . .

Why, then, did the "big plays" rather than the "smaller" ones like *The Emperor Jones* and *Desire Under the Elms* seem so impressive at the time they were produced? Because above all, thought Engel, they gave the illusion of profundity: "their bold psychological penetration, with

31. *Ibid.*, pp. 278, 280, 295.

its sexual and religious ramifications; their prolonged probings of problems of existence, which often titillated as much as it disturbed." The Mannons, Larry Slade and his colleagues, Tyrone, Jr., "may more accurately have embodied the spirit of the death-ridden world of the past quarter century" and "surely reflected faithfully O'Neill's forlorn outlook," but such "monolithic figures" as Brutus Jones and Ephraim Cabot, greater than life, "remain unsurpassed in the entire range of American drama and deserve to be ranked with the finest anywhere since Ibsen."³²

If the interpretation of much of O'Neill's writing in the light of modern psychoanalysis was only a secondary, but very significant, consideration in Engel's *Haunted Heroes*, it was to become central to the whole theme of Doris V. Falk's study, *Eugene O'Neill and the Tragic Tension*, in 1958.³³ Working entirely from the admittedly limited point of view of the psychoanalyst, Falk not only explored the subject more fully than any of her predecessors from the already fairly well-worked angle of Freud, Jung, Adler, and the founders of the "science," but she discovered that O'Neill himself in many ways had anticipated the findings of the Neo-Freudians, especially Erich Fromm and Karen Horney. He was thus an ambivalent figure, reaching back into the past and also forward into the future.³⁴

After announcing her general theme as the ancient tragic one of the "Fall through Pride" and explaining how O'Neill "sees that life and action exist in a perpetual tension between opposites, each of which owes its presence to the presence of the other," Falk pointed out that after all O'Neill was neither a Greek, an Elizabethan, nor a nineteenth century Romantic.

As a twentieth-century man, he had to interpret the ancient idea in twentieth-century terms and symbols. He found those in the conditions of modern living and in the language of psychoanalysis. O'Neill knew, of course, the general outlines of Freudian theory, but his imagination was stimulated most by the work of Jung, and especially by those Jungian concepts formulated by analogy to the universal human problems expressed in art, literature, and philosophy.

Jung's thesis, as interpreted by Falk, saw man's primary need in the desire for "a life of meaning and purpose" rather than in any merely physical drive or "emotional necessity such as power, security, or love." In this way she found that both Jung and O'Neill were mystical in the same sense, recognizing that what Jung calls "psychological truth" exists "independently of objectively proved fact. The constant, eternal longing of the human mind for a universal order and the expression of the longing in archetypal symbols constitute what Jung accepts as the

32. *Ibid.*, pp. 297, 302-303.

33. New Brunswick, New Jersey, 1958.

34. *Ibid.*, pp. 3-13, *passim*.

'psychological' truth of the existence of such an order." Similarly, O'Neill's terms like "Fate," "Mystery," and "the biological past" indicate that to him the order of existence "is to be sought in the forces at work in the human psyche." So, like Jung, he assumes not only a "personal unconscious mind" from which man's problems and actions spring, but also a "collective unconscious" which is "shared by the race as a whole, manifesting itself in archetypal symbols and patterns latent in the minds of all men."

Although O'Neill uses much of the Jungian terminology and ideas, to Falk the conception of "the unconscious as an autonomous force" was the most important. Man's life is a constant struggle to attempt to reconcile the demands of his unconscious with those of his conscious ego. As in Jung, the "Sin of Pride" means to O'Neill that "Man is in fatal error when he assumes that his conscious ego can fulfill his needs without acknowledgment of the power of the unconscious, the modern equivalent of the gods." In clinical terms, the result of the ignorance or suppression of these unconscious needs is neurosis and psychosis; or, in poetical terms, "to consider oneself the sole arbiter of one's destiny is to court destruction."

On the other hand, the conscious ego must attempt to assert itself, for complete submission to the unconscious drives means withdrawal from reality and action, just as does the fatalistic and complete submission to the "will of God."

Thus both men give the "classic answer" to the problem: "Men must find self-knowledge and a middle way which reconciles the unconscious needs with those of the conscious ego." The result of this painful conflict and tension in life is what Jung calls "individuation"—that is, "the gradual realization of the inner, complete personality through constant change, struggle, and process."

Up to this point most of the earlier critics of O'Neill from the psychoanalytical viewpoint would probably have agreed with Falk's elaboration of the Jungian parallels in the plays. Now, however, she injected a new element into the discussion, and asserted: "If O'Neill has consciously echoed some of the thought of Jung, he has unconsciously anticipated the findings of the 'Neo-Freudians,' Karen Horney and Erich Fromm," who, like him, "have turned to the humanities for insights to be applied in the clinic." Revering Freud's "insights and techniques," the Neo-Freudians allow man the capability of "creating his own destiny." But the first thing that he must guard against is the Deadly Sin of Pride—not "that healthy self-respecting pride which gives men confidence to act," but the "false pride that Nietzsche calls 'Vanity'—the attempt to create oneself according to an impossible, untrue self-image." The consequence of this neurotic, unconscious drive "for aspiration to Godlike

perfection" may be a "compulsive monomania." The shame of man's "inevitable failure to achieve it may cause him willfully to punish or destroy himself, or to seek asylum from the struggle in apathy or death."

Leaving the decision in doubt as to whether she regarded the work of the Neo-Freudians as "the most effective school of modern psychology," Falk insisted that their ideas reflected and illuminated the same patterns of human behavior as O'Neill "described from his own observation and experience" in his plays. These same patterns, she admitted, are "described with varying terminologies in all the major psychoanalytical systems, especially in those of Jung and Adler." But in the views of the Neo-Freudians, particularly of Horney, she found a "theory which gives order and coherence to O'Neill's unconscious self-revelations and clearly relates them to his conscious philosophy." The purpose of her ensuing study, she announced, was to "show this correlation, rather than to attempt to determine the ultimate origin of O'Neill's problems in his experience or to wring the last drop of possible subconscious significance from every suggestion of it in the plays."³⁵

The details of the application of this theory to O'Neill's work must be followed in Falk's complete study. The present article must be content to cite her most prominent general conclusions. In the early plays, *Beyond the Horizon*, *The Hairy Ape*, *The Straw*, and *Anna Christie*, she pointed out that the protagonists, in their search to "belong," discovered that their "home—the answer to their need—is not to be found in any mystic force outside themselves. It is to be found only in the vast and foggy realms of their own unconscious, where they seek a self which they can visualize only as a self-image." In other words, one of the chief barriers to their understanding the unconscious "is that set up by a conscious ego which perceives its own limitations but cannot see beyond them to set up an ideal image."³⁶

Not content with exposing the Neo-Freudianism of *The Hairy Ape*—she found that Fromm in *Man for Himself*, with its subtitle, "An Inquiry into the Psychology of Ethics," had stated the dilemma "in words which almost paraphrase O'Neill's explanation" of his play—Falk detected O'Neill's affiliations with two more quite different leaders of modern thought: Sartre and Kierkegaard. O'Neill's "view of the human dilemma" in the *Ape* and the later plays, she believed, suggested that of Sartrean existentialism in its implication that man, in satisfying his need to "belong," abdicates his manhood, ceases to be "existent," and "becomes a passive, vegetative being at the mercy of forces outside himself

35. *Ibid.*, pp. 8–9. Though Falk also cautions that "O'Neill's explicit use of psychoanalytic symbols should be warning enough that superficial Freudian guesswork on the part of a lay critic is likely to be off the track of significant truth," she nevertheless refers to a "fascinating" article by a professional analyst, Dr. Philip Weissman, "Eugene O'Neill's Autobiographical Dramas," in the *Journal of the American Psychoanalytical Association*, V (July, 1957), 432–60, which interprets O'Neill's work as a "sublimation of his own Oedipal drives."

36. *Ibid.*, pp. 27–28.

and beyond his control." Yet these forces have been created by man himself and have no existence "except by virtue of man's existence." "All man can really hope to belong to is himself. His 'sickness unto death' is not his loneliness and anxiety in making choices and bearing responsibility, but what Kierkegaard called 'despair at willing to be oneself.'"³⁷

But Jung was still playing a dominant role in O'Neill. Falk concluded that "the backdrop of sea and fog" in *Anna Christie* was both a symbol of the "mystery behind existence" and a hint at the Jungian race memory or collective unconscious, since Jung himself had called the sea such a symbol "because it hides unsuspected depths under a reflecting surface." O'Neill, indeed, reiterated the fact that the sea was in the blood of the Christophersons. Falk ended her remarks on this play with "Evidence that O'Neill had the Jungian concept in mind here is particularly strong in view of the fact that he suggests it, certainly, in *The Hairy Ape*, . . . and makes it the keystone of *The Emperor Jones*, written in the same year (1929) as the completed version of *Anna Christie*."³⁸

As for *The Emperor Jones*, O'Neill acknowledged, in his use of such symbols as the little formless fears, the silver bullet, the ritual dance, and the crocodile, "the validity of Jung's theory that great literature strikes a responsive chord in all men because its central metaphors can be traced to archetypal images buried in the unconscious mind of humanity."³⁹

Coming back to the Neo-Freudians, Falk found in *Gold* an illustration of Horney's theory of "neurotic pride," in which "the psychiatric and the literary patterns become beautifully parallel." The "ironic symbolism" of the title "reflects the falseness of a self-conception blinded to a reality by pride, by the demands of the ego. . . . With or without the psychoanalytic tags of rationalization or wish-fulfillment, such self-deception has been a fatal flaw of tragic heroes from Oedipus to Willy Loman." The heroine of *Diff'rent*, Emma Crosby, to Falk became "another fanatic, a neurotic of the type referred to by Horney (for reasons which will become obvious) as 'the perfectionist.'"⁴⁰

Falk was able to make much more out of *The First Man* than any previous analyst had done. Finding that the conception of Curtis as "the first man" and Martha as "the first woman" immediately related this play—"and others to follow"—to the psychology of Jung, she found that these two characters were stereotypes corresponding closely to "the Jungian male and female archetypal images, the *animus* and the *anima*."

In extremely general and oversimplified terms the concept is this: Each man has in his unconscious the soul-image of a woman, the *anima*, who represents some of the man's own suppressed feminine characteristics. Comparably, each woman has a male soul image

37. *Ibid.*, pp. 34-36.

38. *Ibid.*, pp. 51-52.

39. *Ibid.*, pp. 67-70.

40. *Ibid.*, pp. 65, 71.

—the *animus*—representing her own suppressed masculinity. The characteristics of these images are the archetypal male and female characteristics: The male is, like the *yang* of Eastern philosophy, the “Spiritual Principle” of the universe, while the female, the *yin*, is the “Physical Principle.”

In his effort to make his characters symbolic, O'Neill has often confined them to almost diagrammatical representations of the Jungian typical male, intellectually creative, idealistic, egotistical, and aggressive, . . . and the typical female, physically creative, realistic, unselfish, and passive, who is as much a mother to her husband as she is a wife. . . .

In O'Neill this woman “appears in many of the archetypal forms which Jung says are images of the *anima*,” and Falk cited examples in *The Great God Brown*, *Dynamo*, *Desire Under the Elms*, *The Fountain*, *Strange Interlude*, and *Marco Millions*. She admitted, however, that it “is impossible to know, of course, exactly to what extent O'Neill drew upon the actual Jungian symbols,” since in “broad outline these characterizations are commonplaces of literature and drama,” as in Ibsen and Strindberg, O'Neill's favorites.

Nevertheless, the close similarity of many of O'Neill's characterizations and symbols to the Jungian concepts is more than coincidental, even though we accept them simply as illuminations of the playwright's own “experience with hidden human motives.” O'Neill's literal acceptance of these archetypes suggests limitations in that experience and a certain immaturity in his entire view of the man-woman relationship which becomes increasingly clear in his work.

Completing her examination of what she called O'Neill's “extremists,” Falk came back to Horney: “All of O'Neill's extremists are represented in Horney's varied list of types of expansive neurotics, but in Bartlett, Jones, and Jayson, O'Neill matched perfectly Horney's description of the ‘arrogant-vindictive’ type.”⁴¹

Falk's analysis of *Strange Interlude* was couched in the most rigid and classical of the Freudian terms and patterns. As she saw the play, the pride which traps its protagonists wears the mask of the father, whom they long to escape to find “their mother, the Cybel of love and free acceptance,” but they are unsuccessful.

To the embattled ego, father is now the expansive, self-centered, and isolated image of itself; he is also the rigid puritanical force—the superego—which forbids his child to give expression to the drives of the id—the libido, the mother. This ideal mother for whom all men long still exists in human consciousness, still represents peace, freedom, and spontaneous love. But embodied in real women, in an actual mother, she reflects not Cybel, but Cybel dominated by the father image in herself.

41. *Ibid.*, pp. 75-77.

Nina, heroine of *Strange Interlude*, is one of these father-dominated mothers. . . .

The other characters in the play were discussed along similar lines.⁴²

Mourning Becomes Electra had always attracted the psychoanalytical critics. Explaining its probable psychological genesis, Falk summed up:

The fatal forces at work in *Mourning Becomes Electra* can be and have been traced to Jung, to Freud, and to the popularization of a psychoanalytic study of one hundred married couples, *A Research in Marriage* by G. V. Hamilton (New York, 1929). The popular version was *What's Wrong with Marriage?* by G. V. Hamilton and Kenneth Macgowan.

Whatever the clinical parallels, however, O'Neill has presented them not as pathology, but as tragedy. The neurotic struggle still differs in this play, as it has in others, from normal and effective human striving in that it is intrapsychic. It is a destructive prototype, within the mind, of battles which in healthy men are waged chiefly against outside forces.

Apparently O'Neill himself and his wife Agnes allowed themselves to be used as subjects for the investigations of Dr. Hamilton, and got a free analysis in return.⁴³

The plays from O'Neill's final period about which Falk had much of importance to say were *The Iceman Cometh* and *Long Day's Journey Into Night*. Larry Slade in the former afforded her a chance to review her whole gallery of modern thinkers, for in Jung's terms Larry exemplifies the "equal distribution of psychic energy"; in Horney's he is "the neurotic who finds a pseudosolution to conflict in 'resignation: the appeal of freedom'"; in Kierkegaard's, when Larry realizes the unreality of his solution all that is left for him is "the disconsolateness of not being able to die"; in Fromm's, the kind of freedom created by man's creation of his own values and his own responsibility for his actions is "that terrifying freedom from which . . . most of us feel compelled to escape."

In defense of this philosophy as a "humanism" Sartre has pointed out that it is as positive as it is negative—as hopeful as it is despairing—in that each man has not only the responsibility, but the opportunity, to create his own destiny, and that each individual is ultimately responsible for the destiny of mankind as a whole. O'Neill has not only placed Larry in this existentialist dilemma, but has made him see and live both sides of the dilemma itself.⁴⁴

Long Day's Journey Into Night, on the other hand, enabled Falk to complete her own long journey into O'Neill without a single reference to any of the recognized psychoanalytical theorists, new school or old. Her

42. *Ibid.*, pp. 121-22.

43. Falk, p. 136, who cites Doris Alexander, "Psychoanalytical Fate in *Mourning Becomes Electra*," *PMLA*, LXVIII (Dec., 1953), 923-34, and W. D. Sievers, *Freud on Broadway* (New York, 1955). Crosswell Bowen, p. 169, confirms and adds to this episode.

44. Falk, pp. 162-64.

approach to the play was made, first of all, through its painful and consistent realism—a reversion to some of O'Neill's first plays. Nevertheless, she declared, the play was full of symbols: the fog, as O'Neill's "first and last symbol of man's inability to know himself, or other men, or his destiny"; the sea; the interior setting in its dark "back parlor," its shabby living room, and the "mask" of the "bright formality of the exterior front parlor"; and the night outside. The characters she regarded as both individualized and symbolic; in fact, "in each of these full portraits lurks the outline of a psychological type who has appeared and reappeared in O'Neill's work." The theme was again the search for the true self.

But Falk also took the opportunity to do a little psychoanalyzing of O'Neill himself through the above-mentioned article by Dr. Philip Weissman on "Eugene O'Neill's Autobiographical Dramas." Weissman noted that in *Long Day's Journey*, personally revelatory as it was, the playwright had carefully suppressed all reference to his first youthful marriage, his son Eugene, whom he did not see until the boy was ten years old, and his divorce. "This omission," diagnosed Weissman, "amounted to an unconscious repression and rejection of the marriage itself, with all its overtones of O'Neill's inadequacy as a husband and father," as well as his identification with his mother.⁴⁵ Dr. Weissman, of course, is not the only one who has attempted to psychoanalyze the playwright in terms of his plays.

As Falk summarized her conclusions: "The progress of O'Neill's mind was steadily away from an outer world where purposeful activity and event, or 'plot,' were important, through an inner world where conflict is important, to an innermost world where nothing is important. . . . In the last plays O'Neill walked in the valley not of death alone, but of nothingness in which all values are illusions and all meaning fades before the terror of ambiguity."⁴⁶

It is very unlikely that this evolution in O'Neill's plays can be attributed alone to the increasingly psychoanalytical approach in them. But no matter what people thought of the influence of psychoanalysis on O'Neill as a playwright, most of them would have agreed that—with the proper training and with the suspension of his own stated antipathy or skepticism toward the "science"—he would have made an excellent psycholanalyst himself.⁴⁷

45. Agnes Boulton in *Part of a Long Story*, pp. 196–206, was astounded when one day some time after her marriage to O'Neill he casually told her of his earlier marriage, fatherhood, and divorce.

46. Falk, pp. 180–89, 196, 199–201.

47. Since the latest of the full-length works on O'Neill, Crosswell Bowen's *The Curse of the Misbegotten*, is primarily a biography, I have not discussed it in this review of my subject. The chief passages in Bowen's book bearing on the topic, however, can be found on pp. 168–69, 192, and 215.

MILESTONES OF MOSCOW'S PAST THEATER SEASON

1. Chekhov Jubilee—Productions of His Early Plays

DRAWING THE ATTENTION of theater-lovers the world over, the Chekhov jubilee, that highlight of the past theatrical season, could not but influence the Soviet stage as a whole and Moscow's theaters in particular. The latter undertook to stage plays by Chekhov that were never before produced on the Moscow stage. Half-forgotten plays, such as *The Wood Goblin* and *Platonov*, which had rarely seen the footlights, were brought out of the archives and produced by theaters noted for their fine taste and excellent stage directing, i.e., by the Vakhtangov and Mossoviet Theaters. And still they did not contribute anything especially new to the understanding of Chekhov the playwright, nor did they shatter the opinions long formed about them. Indeed, nothing special could be expected of them, since having rejected *Platonov* and developed *The Wood Goblin* into *Uncle Vanya* Chekhov thus pronounced severe judgment on them. Of course, both *Platonov* and particularly *The Wood Goblin* have points highlighting the author's lyricism and keen psychological observation, but these plays were only a presage of Chekhov's great future. The theaters had to exert considerable effort to overcome both plays' definite dramatic shortcomings. It is clear, therefore, that their productions can merely be regarded in the light of a historical and literary experiment. Only two roles, performed by the talented Serafima Birman and Rostislav Plyatt, were at the level generally demanded of Chekhov's plays. There is nothing surprising about this, since the parts they played in *The Wood Goblin* were akin to those that were later featured in *Uncle Vanya*.

2. Chekhov Plays at the Maly and Art Theaters

The greatest attention and discussions revolved round the two Chekhov productions staged at the Maly and Art Theaters.

Not counting vaudevilles, this was the Maly's first attempt to produce a Chekhov play, and it selected one that was technically closer to its highly realistic approach—*Ivanov*, in which Chekhov still adhered in a large measure to the dramatic technique of the late 19th century. But producer Boris Babochkin saw some new possibilities in it for the Maly. He entered, as it were, into an argument against the treatment given *Ivanov* by director Maria Knebel at the Pushkin

Theater, a treatment later followed by most other Soviet theaters. Babochkin regarded the play mainly as a biting satire. He did not spare grotesque colors to depict the provincial landowners' milieu that surrounded Ivanov. For each of the heroes he found trenchant and exaggerated traits. I find that this treatment of the play by Babochkin is not always justified and that he dampened Chekhov's lyricism in many ways. In his production the center of attention is not Ivanov but his wife, Sarra, played very consummately by Konstantsia Royek. Her performance, however, served to destroy the producer's interpretation to a large degree, for it showed how important the lyrical touch is even in a complex Chekhov play of accusatory content, and that an unbending approach to Chekhov is highly unfeasible. The two main performers of the role of Ivanov—Mikhail Tsarev and Babochkin himself—interpret Ivanov in different ways. If Tsarev's Ivanov realizes his impotence, Babochkin's Ivanov holds both himself and everybody else in high contempt.

The Sea Gull was revived on the stage of the Art Theater by directors Victor Stanitsyn and Iosif Rayevsky sixty years after it first brought fame to the theater and opened the way to the staging of Chekhov's other plays. The following productions of *The Sea Gull* between 1902 and 1905 did not meet with success. Only now, after staging *Uncle Vanya*, *The Cherry Orchard*, and *Three Sisters*, had the Art Theater undertaken to revive *The Sea Gull*.

The source of a new understanding of Chekhov's plays lay, of course, in Vladimir I. Nemirovich-Danchenko's famous production of *Three Sisters* in 1940, in which he sharply rejected the conception of Chekhov as a listless playwright, a singer of twilight and sorrow, a lyrical and charming pessimist. On the contrary, the theater stressed in Chekhov his profound, firm, hard-won faith in the future, the strength of his ethical demands, not only his presentiment of, but his confidence in future social changes. The present producers of *The Sea Gull* at the Art Theater followed his lead. They were confronted with the question of who was the genuine bearer of Chekhov's ideas and the genuine hero of this play. They did not see that hero in the nervous, tremulous Treplev (played very austere and simply by Puzyrev), who never found himself. The hero, or rather heroine, was Nina Zarechnaya, who through suffering and quest, through her broken life, came to discover an actress in herself. That is how she was played by Tatyana Lavrova, a young actress just out of the Art Theater's school.

A lively discussion has risen around this production. It is argued whether it was right for the theater to renounce a detailed realistic setting: in his stage designs Shifrin strove to give a general, very poetic, decorative solution and made wide use of conventional methods—austere pavilions without ceilings surrounded on either side by

trees and shrubs; conventional contours of trees on the second plane. The actors' approach largely noted for overexaggeration, is also controversial. The interpretation closest to Chekhov is that given to Sorin by Mikhail Yanshin. His Sorin realizes very well that life is on the wane and he is in despair because he can not reverse time.

As different as the results of the new Chekhov productions are, both *Ivanov* and *The Sea Gull* have indubitably contributed to a deeper understanding of Chekhov's art.

3. Arbuzov's *It Happened in Irkutsk*

The crashing event of last season's theatrical life in Moscow was doubtlessly Alexei Arbuzov's *It Happened in Irkutsk*. And though his later play *Twelfth Hour* about Russia of the 'thirties appeared at about the same time, *It Happened in Irkutsk* outshone it and relegated it to the background. *It Happened in Irkutsk* has carried away producers, actors, and audiences to such an extent that it is now running simultaneously in two big Moscow theaters to invariably packed houses. It is both fresh in form and content, and profoundly contemporary in character. Its action takes place at the construction site of a hydro-electric station, and its heroes are the workers at this construction. It is the simple story of a young girl by the name of Valya, still unspoiled, but outwardly a little loud, eccentric and arrogant. The playwright guides his heroine through a touching, stirring love, through the death of her beloved to a new and deep understanding of life. *It Happened in Irkutsk* is a play about the new ethical demands and high moral standards which are being moulded during the construction of a Communist society. Arbuzov depicts the workers who come to the aid of Valya at the hour of her greatest crisis with diverse and interesting colors. He gives tangible shape to the complex problems of love and duty that confront the young man and woman of today. The play is replete with warm love for youth, a desire to help them to find themselves. And it is written with consummate dramaturgical skill. The author includes a Chorus which follows the events in the play and sometimes takes part in the action.

The play offers a wide choice of interpretations. This is corroborated by the fact that the two Moscow theaters which staged it have approached it from entirely different angles.

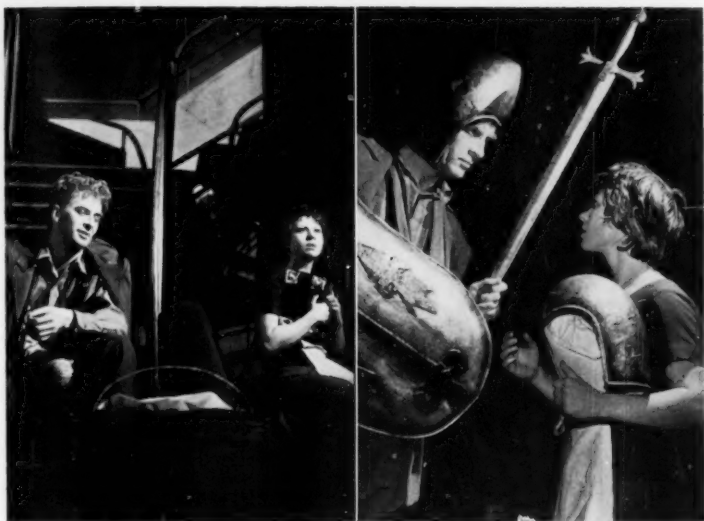
The Vakhtangov production was directed by the young but well-known Yevgeni Simonov; at the Mayakovsky Theater the producer was its art director, Nikolai Okhlopkov. Simonov approached the drama more intimately and with deeper concentration. He replaced the Chorus with four youths who link the audience with the events on the stage. Dressed in black suits they do not mingle with the characters of the play, but are more like outside observers. Simonov cen-

tered his attention on the delineation of the psychological portraits. He was considerably aided in this by the performer of the leading role, Yulia Borisova, who seems born for the part. At first rude and provocative, she gradually reveals a capacity for deep feeling and skillfully leads the audience to an understanding of the various shades of her experiences, justifying every unexpected and seemingly trifling but really alarming aspect of her heroine's behavior. The stage sets fully correspond to the producer's general idea. The changes in place are marked by but a few details. The chief motif throughout is the bridge spanning the Angara and receding into the hazy blue distances.

Okhlopkov employed entirely different methods in his production. A sweeping scale and penchant for monumentality predominate in his interpretation of the play. The stage is connected with the audience by a narrow path, of the type of a Japanese flower path. The Chorus is on the stage and follows the action as the audience's representative. Okhlopkov depicts his characters with strong and bright colors. He is interested not so much in the psychological details as in the general delineation of the roles and the panorama unfolding before the spectators.

4. Other Performances

None of the other theatrical productions of the past season were able to vie with *It Happened in Irkutsk* in popularity. And yet there was a sufficient choice of interesting plays of diverse genres about every aspect of Soviet life. A characteristic feature of the season was the theaters' preference for gay comedies, and rollicking laughter was often to be heard in the various auditoriums. In this respect first place was again taken by the Vakhtangov Theater in which Yulia Borisova won still greater fame for her role in Safronov's *The Cook*. Shtein's *Spring Fiddles* was brilliantly staged and acted at the Mayakovsky Theater. The Lenin Komsomol Theater produced Narinyani's *Dangerous Age*, which good-naturedly and sometimes bitinglly derides the "dandies" among today's youth. Important subjects of modern life were posed in the plays, *Dawns in Autumn* by Blinov (Maly Theater) and *Retribution* by Berezko (Yermolova Theater). Problems of modern ethics were advanced in Shtok's *Anchor Square* at the Soviet Army Theater. A new stage adaptation of Nikolayeva's *Battle on the Way* was produced at the Art Theater. Great interest was shown in Nazim Hikmet's *Sword of Damocles*, staged by Valentin Pluchek at the Satire Theater, a satire against trifling with atomic armament. As before, the Moscow theaters gave considerable place in their repertoires to the plays of foreign dramatists. After the triumph of Miller's *Death of a Salesman* at the Pushkin Theater in Leningrad it was staged at the Art Theater. Berthold Brecht, whose plays are rarely produced



B. Brecht and L. Feuchtwanger's "Dreams of Simone Machard" as staged at the Moscow Yermolova Theater. Simone Machard—Yelena Koroleva; George—Yuri Volkov.



A. Arbuzov's "It Happened in Irkutsk" at the Vakhtangov Theater. Scene from Act II.



A. Chekhov's "Sea Gull" at the Moscow Art Theater. Scene from Act II. Trigorin—P. Masalsky; Arkadina—A. Tarasova; Nina Zarechnaya—T. Lavrova; Zorin—M. Yanshin.



Chekhov's "The Wood Goblin" at the Mossosviet Theater. Yegor Petrovich—R. Plyatt; Yulia Stepanova—A. Molchadskaya.

on the Soviet stage, was represented this time by *Dreams of Simone Machard* (written jointly with Leon Feuchtwanger) at the Yermolova Theater.

I should like to dwell at length on a play which gives a brilliant idea of the force and talent of our youth. This is *My Friend Kolka* by the young playwright Khmelik, produced by the Studio of the Central Children's Theater on the latter's stage. It features the growing sense of responsibility in the youth towards their duties, and shows how easily a child can be hurt by inattentive, insensible treatment. This play about the ways and means of bringing up children was staged by Anatoly Efros as a merry game. The members of the cast bring out onto the stage and set up the properties and furniture, and yet, in spite of all its humor, the serious attitude towards life never once disappears from the play. Since all the actors are girls and boys of eighteen and nineteen, the actions of their heroes—schoolchildren—gain absolute authenticity. They play with great talent, elan, and fervor. This young spirited performance has indubitably added to the color and spice of Moscow's past theatrical season.

PAVEL MARKOV

A MASQUE OF REASON AND J. B.: TWO TREATMENTS OF THE BOOK OF JOB

IN THE CHAOTIC MID-TWENTIETH CENTURY it is not surprising that two poets who have been most aware of man's seemingly isolated position in the universe turned to the Book of Job for inspiration. *A Masque of Reason*, a one act play in verse by Robert Frost, published in 1945, and Archibald MacLeish's *J. B.*, a verse drama of eleven scenes, published and produced on Broadway in 1956, have more in common than their common Old Testament source, but, at the same time are unmistakably different from each other.

The Book of Job, written by an anonymous poet in the early half of the fifth century B.C. in Babylon, can be divided into two sections from the point of view of structure. Chapters one and two and chapters thirty-eight through forty-two present the familiar story of the patient Job. All of the dramatic action takes place in these chapters. The middle chapters of the book (chapters three to thirty-eight) contain the argument of the Book in the form of a long-sustained dialogue between Job and his comforters. The middle chapters are philosophical in nature and contain some of the most beautiful and moving poetry in the Old Testament, but they are not conceived in dramatic terms. It is to the credit of MacLeish and Frost as playwrights that they have leaned more heavily on the opening and closing chapters of the Book of Job as sources for their works than on the middle chapters, but because of this, they have sacrificed some of the poetic possibilities which such a rich source might afford.¹

The problem of the Book of Job is a complex one. Essentially it can be resolved into the question, what is the meaning of suffering which is apparently undeserved?² It is the problem of evil, a much more complicated one than the problem of guilt, which concerns the ancient poet. In the end Job discovers that he can set his own distress aside in contemplation of the wonders of God's creation. The question of his own personal guilt no longer troubles him. Job learns that the Behemoth and Leviathan, symbols of evil, hold no terrors for the Almighty, and by implication, if man accepts the ways of God and

✓ 1. See Margaret Brackenbury Crook, *The Cruel God* (Boston, 1959), Chapter 19, pp. 170-79.

2. Job asks important subordinate questions throughout the Book. Included among them are: If a man does not receive vindication in his lifetime, can he know of it after death (14: 7-15)? If a man, after death, can know nothing of God's doings, can he induce God to vindicate him in his lifetime (16-18)? Can a man in the clutches of death—but not yet dead—be aware before he dies of his vindication (19-20)? Miss Crook makes these points, but they are all questions of guilt and are clearly subordinate to the larger issue of evil.

believes in Him, evil will assume its proper subordinate role among the creations of God. Evil will not be the dominant factor in the human situation, but man's faith in God must be firm for him to realize this.

This Old Testament answer satisfies neither Frost nor MacLeish. Each of these contemporary poets attempts to answer the basic question set forth in the Book of Job in a way characteristic of his own poetic vision. And each of them, ultimately, moves outside the scope of the Old Testament in his search for the answer.

Both contemporary poets place strong and dramatic emphasis on the role played by Job's wife. In the Old Testament only two verses are devoted to repartee between Job and his wife.

Then said his wife unto him: 'Dost thou still hold fast thine integrity? blaspheme God and die.' But he said unto her: 'Thou speakest as one of the impious women speaketh. What? shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?' For all this did not Job sin with his lips (Chapter 2:9, 10).

But all of *A Masque of Reason* is devoted to conversation between Job, Frost's anthropomorphic God, and Thyatira, Job's wife. She is essential to the play. At one point she says, after the entrance of the Devil,

Well, if we aren't all here,
Including me, the only Dramatis
Personae needed to enact the problem.³

In *J. B.*, too, the major plot involves J. B. and his wife Sarah. In scene one she asks the children whether they had thought of God while they were enjoying life. She senses that things cannot go on as well as they have been going, but believes that "God rewards and God can punish./ God is just."⁴ When tragedy strikes, however, she loses faith. She refuses to live by the Old Testament prescription of acceptance.

J. B.:

Sarah!

Do not let my hand go, Sarah!

Say it after me:

The Lord

Giveth . . . say it.

SARAH: *mechanically* The Lord giveth.

J. B.: The Lord taketh away . . .

SARAH: *flinging his hand from hers, shrieking*

Takes!

Kills! Kills! Kills! Kills!

But in the end, it is she who enunciates MacLeish's solution to the problem.

3. Robert Frost, *A Masque of Reason* (New York, 1945), p. 20. Subsequent references are to this edition.

4. Archibald MacLeish, *J.B.* (Cambridge, 1956), p. 39. Subsequent references are to this edition.

J. B. interrupts this slight verse, and entreats God, using the literal Old Testament language:

O, that I knew where I might find Him!
That I might come even to His seat!
I would order my cause before Him,
And fill my mouth with arguments.

Behold,
I go forward but He is not there,
Backward, but I cannot perceive Him. . . .

A graphic illustration of a way in which verse drama can heighten the meaning of poetry is MacLeish's introduction of the comforters. J. B. asks them why they have come, whereupon they answer,

BILDAD: *a coarse laugh* For Comfort, Big Boy
Didn't you ring?

ZOPHAR: *a fat laugh* That's it: for comfort!

ELIPHAZ: *a thin laugh* All the comfort you can find.

BILDAD: All the kinds of

ELIPHAZ: All the comforts.

ZOPHAR: You called us and we came.

J. B.: I called
God.

BILDAD: Didn't you!

ELIPHAZ: Didn't you just.

The comforters, in this little repartee, interrupt each other, laugh, each in his own mocking tone, and acknowledge by the subtle shadings in their intonations (*e.g.*, the coarse, fat, and thin laughs) that there is no God in their world. Then MacLeish permits them to present rhetorically their philosophies. The contrast between the rhetoric in which Bildad pronounces his truths derived from the statistics of history, Eliphaz announces his truth derived from psychology, and Zophar pronounces his truth from biological theory, and the statements with which they interrupt their rhetoric, hints at the meaninglessness of their words (*e.g.*, Zophar: Blasphemy!/ Bildad: Bullshit!). Words spoken by unsavory characters cannot be taken seriously, and particularly on stage, their characters, built up by nuances like the fat, coarse, and thin laughs, consistently reinforce their ultimately meaningless philosophies.

In every case, too, the first messenger speaks in slight, conversational, unpoetic, crude words, complementing his sordid role as emissary of evil, a role he appears to relish. The second messenger, on the other hand, who is more sensitive, reflects this sensitivity and compassion in his diction.

Can the tooth among the stones make answer? . . .
Can the seven bones reply? . . .

Out in the desert in the tombs
 Are potter's figures; two of warriors,
 Two of worthies, two of camels,
 Two of monsters, two of horses.
 Ask them why. They will not answer you. . . .

Man's archeological past, allusions to Noah's Ark, and God in the potter's role, create the poetic phrasing of this great philosophical question.

Similarly, MacLeish's "maids in mothballs," the maids serving as embodiments of the "impious women" mentioned in the Biblical text, speak in dialect. Mrs. Botticelli's "Good night, ladies. Good night, ladies. . . ." is a most apt allusion to Eliot's *Wasteland*, for these women are representative of MacLeish's wasteland, a land which the Devil's vision orders.⁷

Satan sees.

He seeks the parked car by the plane tree.
 He sees beneath the fusty door,
 Beneath the rug, those almost children
 Struggling on the awkward seat—
 Every impossible delighted dream
 She's ever had of loveliness, of wonder,
 Spilled with her garters to the filthy floor.
 Absurd despair! Ridiculous agony!⁸

It is this sex-filled world which Job and Sarah are to transcend by finding love.

Nickles and Mr. Zuss, representatives of the "real" world, too, seldom soar to rhetorical heights. And when they do it is because they are saying something particularly significant. It is no accident that, of the two, Mr. Zuss often speaks the more poetic language. Nickles' lines, even when they start off poetically, often degenerate into a metre which emphasizes his harsh viewpoint.

When God pursues him in the web too far—
 Implacable, eternal Spider.
 A man can always cease; it's something—
 A judgment anyway: reject
 The whole creation with a stale pink pill.

The soft syllables and the sophisticated imagery of the first part of the phrase become nothing more than the short static "stale pink pill" of the everyday world. The diction approximates the meaning.

The same is true in *A Masque of Reason*. Surely this bit of magnificent rhetoric

7. On page 130 it is significant that Jolly Adams, the child of the "impious women" hears God speak ("Under the wind there was a word. . . ."), but the older women tell her that it was only "thunder in the wind."

8. Another explicit overtone of sex is the appearance of the Girl with the two newspapermen. ("I wish I was home in bed with a good/Boy or something. . . .")

The myrrh tree gives it. Smell the rosin burning?
 The ornaments the Greek artificers
 Made for the Emperor Alexius,
 The Star of Bethlehem, the pomegranates,
 The birds, seem all on fire with Paradise.
 And hark, the gold enameled nightingales
 Are singing. . . .

is equalled nowhere else in the poem. It is recalled in the last speech by Thyatira,

Now someone can light up the Burning Bush
 And turn the gold enameled artificial birds on.
 I recognize them. Greek artificers
 Devised them for Alexius Commenus.
 They won't show in the picture. That's too bad.

But does the fact that rhetoric of this nature occurs only once mean that the play fails as poetry, as Yvor Winters suggests?⁹ On the contrary, the lines must be considered in relation to the meaning of the play as a whole. Their beauty and rich rhetorical tone serve as a sharp contrast to the light, irreverent, conversational tone of the main body of the play. Their lush quality sets off the absurd plight of a troubled God, caught in the branches of a tree. They serve, too, as a serious reminder that the theme has relevance for all mankind, whether pagan or Christian, just as do the allusions to the "incense tree," "Burning Bush," and "Christmas Tree," at the beginning of the play. In the end the birds which seemed "on fire with Paradise," become merely "gold enameled artificial birds," which will not even show up in the picture Thyatira is to snap. "That's too bad," she says, acknowledging that there has been a failure to answer the very significant problems posed by the Book of Job. But this announcement of failure is part of the fabric of Frost's work. As MacLeish's use of dialogue enhances the seriousness of his attempt, so Frost's diction, the rhetoric in the absurd situation, adds to his achievement.

One other very important aspect of these plays indicates the different treatments which Frost and MacLeish accord to the Book of Job. Frost emphasizes the inadequacy of man's conception of the problem of evil when man thinks only in rational terms, while MacLeish asserts the ability of man to find a way of overcoming the terrors of the universe. Thus, Frost allows his protagonists to be so overcome with small talk about fashionable "modern" items that they never do get around to dealing with the problem in a significant way. Job's ultimate reward is "promotion to a saint"; God pitches a prefabricated plywood throne; Thyatira succeeds in charming God, ("She's beautiful," He says. And

9. Yvor Winters, "Robert Frost: Or, the Spiritual Drifter As Poet," *Sewanee Review* (Autumn, 1948). 581-85 are devoted to an attack on *A Masque of Reason*, in which Winters charges that the poem "is matched in triviality and general ineptitude by the collection of short poems entitled *Steeple Bush*."

in another place He says, "I'm charmed with her.") as a modern executive's wife might impress the president of a company at a cocktail party. She, true to her consistently ironical and humorous character, does not even ask God for any real truth, but asks instead for some "stray scraps of palliative reason," which might perform the same function as MacLeish's "stale pink pill." The approach of the protagonists to the problem is a superficial one and so Job and his wife fail in their search for the truth.

When Job presses God for reasons, finally saying, "The artist in me cries out for design," as if putting his artistic integrity on the line, God does answer, but He puts Job off with the inadequate Old Testament story. "I was just showing off to the Devil, Job,/ As is set forth in chapters one and two."¹⁰ Job owns up that this is "human" of God. This is the climax of the actionless verse drama. What follows, God advising Job to steer clear of committees, the appearance of the Devil who prompts Job's wife to snap their picture, and the Devil's near disappearance on a "tendency," defined by the poet as a "long, long narrow strip/ Of middle-aisle church carpet," is anti-climatic but hardly irrelevant to the point of the play. For the entire play is structured around "tendencies" of one sort or another. To use a dictionary definition, the play is structured around "influences to cause a result." The point is that all of the "tendencies" employed in the play, including Job's good-natured questioning of God, and Thyatira's charm and wit, are inadequate to obtain the answer to the very important question brought up in the Book of Job. In this play Frost is not failing to distinguish between a "trivial fashion and an intellectual movement, just as he is unable to differentiate among reformers," as Yvor Winters says he is. The point at issue is not the poet's social viewpoint but his assertion that it is futile to attempt to arrive at any understanding of God's acts in terms of any "prefabricated" solutions. The answers to the questions which are asked, Frost says, should be more meaningful than the answers to the game of "twenty questions" to which Thyatira alludes, and should go beyond the limitations of the "church carpet."

Perhaps the most important poetic and dramatic effects achieved by MacLeish in *J. B.* are accomplished in imagery associated with vision. In handling this symbolic concept, MacLeish not only exhibits his skill as a poet, but also demonstrates how poetic meanings may be enhanced on a stage. Throughout the course of the play the myster-

10. Reginald L. Cook asserts that "this is the point of the *Masque*, whose message is the necessity of man to learn like Job his submission to unreason." Reginald L. Cook, *The Dimensions of Robert Frost* (New York, 1958), 153. While this is the dramatic climax of the plot, in other words the point which determines the resolution of the question of the plot, it is not the message of the *Masque*. The message can perhaps be better stated by saying that reason alone won't work in answering existential questions. But unreason is not the answer either. Frost's answer is to be found in the other half of his "New England Bibleicals" *A Masque of Mercy* (New York, 1947).

iousness of the stars is paralleled in an antithetical way with the ordinary light bulbs which light the man-made world. In the Prologue Nickles says:

Those stars that stare their stares at me—
Are those the staring stars I see
Or only lights . . .
not meant for me?

Stage directions and lighting accent the meaning of the drama.

The light bulbs fade out, yellow to red to gone. A slow strong glow spots the platform throwing gigantic shadows up across the canvas. Back to back the shadows of Mr. Zuss and Nickles adjust their masks. The masked shadows turn to each other and gravely bow. Their gestures are the stiff formal gestures of pantomime. Their voices, when they speak, are so magnified and hollowed by the masks that they scarcely seem their own.

GODMASK: Whence comest thou?

SATANMASK: From going to and from in the earth

There is a snicker of suppressed laughter.

And from walking up and down it . . .

A great guffaw. Mr. Zuss tears off his mask.

MR. ZUSS: shouting

Lights!

The spotlight fades out. The dangling bulbs come feebly on.

Nobody told you to laugh like that . . .

A "slow, strong glow" accompanies the Biblical phrases, but "dangling light bulbs" set the scene for Mr. Zuss's offhand comment.

Finally, J. B.'s perspective changes from the terrifying macrocosmic Old Testament viewpoint to a more human, meaningful, viewpoint. In the closing scene, J. B. says, "It's too dark to see." Whereupon Sarah answers, "Then blow on the coal of the heart,/ my darling."

J. B.: The coal of the heart . . .

SARAH:

It's all the light now.

Blow on the coal of the heart.

The candles in churches are out.

The lights have gone out in the sky,

Blow on the coal of the heart

And we'll see by and by . . .

We'll see where we are,

The wit won't burn and the wet soul smoulders.

Blow on the coal of the heart and we'll know . . .

We'll know . . .

The light increases, plain white daylight from the door as they work.

MacLeish's play, in the end, is resolved in an affirmation that love can grow in a world where there is apparently no love, just as the

forsythia petals grow among the ashes. Frost's point on the other hand, is that if you consider the problem of evil in a purely rational way, given man's limited intelligence and limited ability to comprehend the wonders of the universe, all you can do is laugh. He is not really convinced by the ending to the Old Testament story of Job. Indeed, it was not until two years after the publication of *A Masque of Reason*, when Frost published his *Masque of Mercy*, that his statement on this problem could be considered complete.¹¹ In *A Masque of Mercy*, Frost spells out his solution. He writes,

Christ came to introduce a break with logic
That makes all other outrage seem as child's play:
The Mercy on the Sin against the Sermon.
Strange no one ever thought of it before Him.
'Twas lovely and its origin was love.

In *A Masque of Reason* Frost does not touch on any answers to the questions he raises. He asserts only the significance of the problem and the inadequacy of superficial ways of dealing with it. His achievement in this play must be judged within the limitations of the farce-like situation he creates, and in these terms he is consistent. If his play is not as meaningful or powerful as MacLeish's longer work, it is because Frost's final answer to the problems raised is deferred to *A Masque of Mercy*.

11. See W. R. Irwin, "The Unity of Frost's *Masques*," *American Literature* (November, 1960), 302-312, printed after this article had been written, for a discussion of this point.

ELY STOCK

THE DRAMATIC ACHIEVEMENT OF T. S. ELIOT

IF WE ANALYZE those elements which his five completed plays have in common, then we shall have a sense of T. S. Eliot's development as a dramatist as well as a fair estimation of his achievement. The most significant element which these dramas have in common is the similar nature of the climax of each. The turning point of all five plays consists in the gaining of knowledge by the protagonist about the nature of his moral struggle, but in no case is this knowledge attained dramatically, that is, through struggle and conflict.

The realization by Thomas à Becket in *Murder in the Cathedral* (1935) that his central moral necessity is not to do the right deed for the wrong reason comes nearest to escaping this fault. Becket, as a result of his four temptations, is driven to self-analysis and has an immediate insight into the nature of his dilemma. However, there are essentially no forces which will block this insight: he out-of-hand rejects the first three temptations and rejects the final one immediately upon realizing its implications. The central uncertainty in *The Family Reunion* (1939) is whether Harry, Lord Monchensey, did or did not murder his wife. The visit of the Eumenides would seem conclusive evidence that he had done so, but a surprising, alternative explanation for their presence is suggested. Release from his torment becomes possible only when the idea is suggested to him that he may have dreamed that he murdered his wife: his suffering may be the result of his having to be the consciousness of his unhappy family. Again, there is no opposition to his obtaining this knowledge: he has but to ask the right question of his Aunt Agatha, and all the stimuli of his homecoming encourage him to ask this question. Similarly, the main action of *The Cocktail Party* (1949) is the attempt of the adulterous Chamberlaynes to be reconciled and the effort of their lovers, particularly Celia Coplestone, to live well. The Chamberlaynes are reconciled and Celia does realize her destiny through the counsel of Sir Henry Harcourt-Reilly, who has manipulated their responses until he is in a position to give them the requisite knowledge. In *The Confidential Clerk* (1954), the central problem of the main characters is to attain self-knowledge and identity through "beginning to understand another person." This understanding is automatic once confidences are exchanged and Mrs. Guzzard's testimony has been heard. Finally, the plot of *The Elder Statesman* (1959) revolves around the necessity of Lord Claverton to recognize, accept, and confess past

moral guilt, especially his sins of bringing out Fred Culverwell's weakness, of not respecting Maisie Batterson's capacity for loving (self-centered and foolish as it was), of wanting to perpetuate himself in Michael, of wanting Monica to give her life to adoring the man he pretended himself to be.

To summarize: quasi-conflict in Eliot's plays is caused by the psychological confusion—which Eliot portrays as moral confusion—of the main characters. However, all events conspire to resolve this confusion, and, in all cases, the protagonists quickly accept enlightenment. Only in *Murder in the Cathedral* is the pretense of decision seriously involved.

Another way of stating this conclusion would be to observe that all five plays are essentially static; once again, this fact is not so immediately obvious in *Murder in the Cathedral* as in the other four. Throughout the opening section of this drama, Becket's pride has been so emphasized by the Chorus, the Three Priests, the Herald, and the Four Tempters that we hardly realize that the conflict is essentially over before it has begun. When Becket understands that he is in danger of seeking martyrdom through pride rather than through humility, his will has been purified, but the play is but half done. Because of the heroic stature of Becket, however, interest is continued by the desire to see whether he will maintain his integrity when put to the test—but there is no real doubt. Moreover, the author does manage to raise some philosophical, if not dramatic, conflicts. Which is correct, the theological or the naturalistic evaluation of human action? This theme is most eloquently developed in the Archbishop's sermon to his congregation, but it is present throughout the play. The address of the knights to the modern audience poses the question of whether we who by-and-large agree with the objectives of Becket's murderers—"a just subordination of the pretensions of the Church to the welfare of the State"—have the moral right to condemn their crimes.

However, neither *The Family Reunion*, nor *The Cocktail Party*, nor *The Confidential Clerk*, has either the magnificence of language or the grandeur of theme of *Murder in the Cathedral* to draw our attention away from the static quality of its drama. If there is not sufficient action for the spectator to become involved with the protagonists, if their psychological conflicts are ultimately solved by external agencies, why should we care whether Harry murdered his wife, or whether the Chamberlaynes and company attain salvation, or whose child is whose in *The Confidential Clerk*? This failure of involvement is most obvious in *The Cocktail Party*'s one moment of high intensity—the description of the off-stage crucifixion of Celia Coplestone. Granted that Sir Henry, both during the interview with Celia and shortly afterwards,

intimates the possibility of such an outcome, no previous action of hers prepares the audience for her horrible fate. In the absence of this action, although the manner of her death is perfectly credible, is Celia a strong enough symbol for the ethical and religious ideals which her death represents? While she possesses an awareness of the intrinsic loneliness of the human soul, in spite of the imperative need to love and be loved, is this awareness—by itself—sufficient motivation for making her a Christ symbol? The fact that this denouement shocks the viewer, rather than creates the feeling that it is the logical outcome of what has preceded, leads me to believe that a failure of communication exists. The audience's concern is on a sentimental level—how horrible that such a girl was crucified!

Since the first three plays employ a chorus—either overtly as in the first two plays or implicitly as in the third—an analysis of the uses to which Eliot has put the chorus will furnish an insight into his early dramatic development. In *Murder in the Cathedral* the Chorus, for the most part, are ideal spectators. While they do appeal to Becket to return to France, theirs is basically a symbolic action: in no way do they actually influence the main action. Their function is primarily to provide exposition, to set the mood of the play, and to present the aspirations of the common folk—the desire for a reasonable amount of comfort and anonymity—in contrast with the heroic motivation of Becket. And they have also—rather eloquently—a sense of the insufficiency of common aspiration. They help establish the mood by some of the most imaginative lines in the play, the most extensive use of poetic imagery. And, if the Chorus is directed as a dance group, an additional element of movement is injected into the drama. Furthermore, their final speech (together with the last utterance of the Third Priest) is a concrete expression of the effect of Becket's death and almost a summation of the meaning of the entire play. By realizing their implication in his murder, by realizing that his was not the death of a madman but the symbol of the noblest spiritual aspirations of man, the Chorus has gained a new insight into the relation of man to God and into the evaluation of the acts of an individual man. The Chorus affirms that Thomas' martyrdom was a meaningful act.

In contrast with *Murder in the Cathedral*, the chorus of *The Family Reunion* consists of four of the participants in the action, Harry's uncomprehending aunts and uncles. Their attitude is a negative one from beginning to end: "We're involved in something we don't understand and don't like; how we wish we weren't involved!" Moreover, since this attitude is expressed in the course of their personal speeches, their acting as a chorus not only does not contribute organically to the effectiveness of the drama, it detracts from it: the realistic context in which they have been presented seems quite artificially and non-

functionally to be destroyed. This observation is even more applicable to *The Cocktail Party* where, towards the close of the second act, without any preparation for the spectator, Reilly, Julia, and Alex assume the role of commentators upon, and manipulators of, the action. The surprise is all the greater in the case of Julia Shuttlethwaite since she is quite convincingly portrayed as an absolute fool in the first act. I assume that it was Eliot's intention to suggest that the gods—the rulers of human destiny—can assume strange disguises when necessary to achieve their purposes. However, since the setting and the language of the beginning of *The Cocktail Party*, and indeed the greater part of the play thereafter, are completely realistic (I shall return to this latter point in a moment), there is absolutely no reason why we should not take Julia and Alex at face value. By suggesting that the trivial is but a mask for the sublime, Eliot is attempting to impose upon his work values which are not inherent in the action. The effect of the violent yoking of these opposites can be best demonstrated by quoting Julia's final remarks, which are an evaluation of what has happened to the main characters:

Everyone makes a choice, of one kind or another,
And then must take the consequences. Celia chose
A way of which the consequence was Kinkanja.

Peter chose a way that leads him to Boltwell;
And he's got to go there. . . .
And now the consequence of the Chamberlaynes' choice
Is a cocktail party. They must be ready for it.
Their guests may be arriving at any moment.

REILLY: Julia, you are right. It is also right
That the Chamberlaynes should now be giving a party.

Even if irony is intended, by presenting the cocktail party as significant a symbol for the acceptance of responsibility of one's choices as Celia's crucifixion, the concept of crucifixion is cheapened: the party is not elevated to a new value. I am not attacking the validity of the proposition which is offered here—although I do think that its primary emphasis upon consequences rather than choice is a misplaced one—but I object because, within the frame of the play, Celia's crucifixion is reduced to the status of an exemplum to justify the Chamberlayne cocktail party.

Since Eliot's plays are presented as poetic dramas, no examination of them would be complete without an examination of their poetry. Undoubtedly, as poetry, *Murder in the Cathedral* is the most effective of the five: it possesses a vividness of imagery and metaphor, a portrayal of characterization and emotions by subtle shifts in poetic rhythms, which is almost totally lacking in the other plays. The language draws attention to itself by such obvious devices as alliteration

and rhyme, and because so much of it forms an incantation. Since the language does draw attention to itself, variations in the use of language—the most radical being the address of the Four Knights to the audience in modern journalistic prose—become particularly meaningful. I shall not quote to illustrate my point, as the play as a whole constitutes my evidence. But in *The Cocktail Party*, on the other hand, aside from the occasional use of poetic repetition and, more importantly, the punctuation, there would be no way of distinguishing the language from ordinary prose—it is in fact prose masquerading as poetry. To illustrate, we need but recur to the speech of Julia's I have already quoted, one of the key passages in the entire play. The language of virtually the whole play is exactly on this level, poetry by the grace of punctuation: the verse can be scanned by the finger, not by the ear. Its recording furnishes pragmatic evidence for this supposition: the language simply does not sound like poetry. The same can be said of the language of *The Confidential Clerk* and of *The Elder Statesman*.

In *The Family Reunion*, Harry, Agatha, and his cousin Mary as sensitive beings are permitted to employ poetic devices; the others—except when they function as a chorus—manifestly speak prose. A typical example of prose masquerading as verse is the following speech by Gerald:

Nevertheless, Amy, there's something in Violet's suggestion.
Why not ring up Warburton, and ask him to join us?
He's an old friend of the family, it's perfectly natural
That he should be asked. He looked after all the boys
When they were children. I'll have a word with him.
He can talk to Harry, and Harry need have no suspicion.
I'd trust Warburton's opinion.

I have quoted this speech because it is immediately followed with a "poetic passage" by Agatha:

It seems a necessary move
In an unnecessary action,
Not for the good that it will do
But that nothing may be left undone
On the margin of the impossible.

Since the setting and major portion of the diction is overwhelmingly prosaic, the above lines seem doubly artificial in their context. In addition, even making allowances for theatrical conventions, Agatha is not speaking to the audience but to Gerald and his relations; they respond as if she had made a sensible remark to them (a similar observation could be made about Harry's conversations with the others). By reserving poetic language for three characters, Eliot has

not succeeded in intensifying his communication; rather he has effectively destroyed the credibility and reality of his presentation.

Certain conclusions can now be made about Eliot's development and achievement as a dramatist. If conflict either in the form of external or physical impediments towards the attainment of the protagonist's goal be at the heart of good drama, then Eliot's achievement is definitely a limited one. His characters suffer from a confusion of values. They seek enlightenment, but this enlightenment is acquired automatically as in the self-insight of Becket and Lord Claverton, semi-automatically by asking the right question as does Lord Monchensey, by the manipulation of external forces as in *The Cocktail Party*, by plot manipulation (or coincidence) in *The Confidential Clerk*. While in the absence of conflict a great deal of emotional posturing is still possible, the action is essentially negligible. This last observation is least applicable to *Murder in the Cathedral* where the archbishop's interactions with the knights constitute a test of his resolutions. Since we do not see the protagonists in action, again with a reservation in favor of Becket, we cannot accept them as strong enough symbols for the ethical and religious ideals which they seem intended to represent (as I have already pointed out, this failure is most obvious in the case of Celia Coplestone). *Murder in the Cathedral* surmounts its dramatic limitations by its fine poetry and by the heroic quality of Thomas à Becket as a man and as a thinker. The other plays lack this magnificent language; and what poetry enters *The Family Reunion* appears as a discordant element. If Eliot is to assist in the creation of a modern poetic drama, he should have persisted in the direction of *Murder in the Cathedral* rather than have followed the path he did take.

BERNARD KNIEGER

BABY DOLL AND THE PONDER HEART

IN THE SUMMER OF 1955 Tennessee Williams submitted the movie script for *Baby Doll* to Elia Kazan, who had been urging the playwright to make a film of two early one-acts: *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* (1945) and *The Long Stay Cut Short or The Unsatisfactory Supper* (1946). Although the plots of the two short plays are obviously incorporated into *Baby Doll*, the publisher's note which points out that the script is "quite different from the two short plays," is accurate. The similarities are basically those of plot; the differences, those of setting, of the character of *Baby Doll*, and of her situation.

The plot of *27 Wagons Full of Cotton* involves the burning of the Syndicate Plantation cotton gin by Jake Meighan and the delivery to him next day of twenty-seven wagons of cotton by the unfortunate superintendent of the Syndicate, Silva Vicarro. Vicarro, having determined from Jake's naïve wife, Flora, that it is Jake who has burnt down his gin, puts into practice the good-neighbor policy announced by Meighan. Vicarro's part in this reciprocal program involves raping and masochistically whipping Flora Meighan while her husband is ginning the twenty-seven wagons of cotton. Part of the satire in the word "comedy" of the subtitle, "A Mississippi Delta Comedy," is that Jake returns home, tired but elated over the prospect of Vicarro's future business, and utterly oblivious to the physically-punished and mentally-distracted condition of his wife.¹ In *The Long Stay Cut Short* Archie Lee and *Baby Doll* Bowman are dissatisfied with the supper of underdone greens prepared by Aunt Rose and urge with considerable heat that she go to live with one of her other relatives. Not knowing where to go, she remains outside in the face of a rising storm and heavy winds, which push her slight figure out toward the rose bush in the yard.

It is not strange that for the movie audience Tennessee Williams altered the two plays. For example, the change of the title to *Baby Doll* from *The Whip Hand*, as previously announced, indicates a toning down of the viciousness of Vicarro (Vacarro in the movie); since the corresponding character in the movie never uses his whip, except playfully, it is almost vestigial. Undoubtedly Elia Kazan as director

1. In a review of the play, which was produced at The Playhouse in New York in April, 1955, a critic comments that "Jake finally becomes aware of the situation but realizes that he is beaten." *Theatre Arts*, XXXIX (July 1955), 17. The play as printed, however, ends with Jake's happily ordering Flora to hop in the Chevy. He is going to take her to town to see what's on at the movies.

also exerted a strong influence. According to Henry Hewes, Kazan "tends to remove a certain anti-social flavor by persuading Williams to make his antagonists more likable, and by getting him to come up with softening after-thoughts like the suspense ending of *Baby Doll*, which negates the hardboiled ending of *27 Wagons Full of Cotton*.² It is true that *Baby Doll* is treated with comparative kindness by Vacarro, and that Aunt Rose Comfort McCorkle will apparently find a home as Vacarro's housekeeper. Such changes may be chalked up to the need to lighten repellent action. There are changes in the movie script, however, which do not seem attributable to the influence of Hollywood.

One is in the setting. Whereas Archie Lee Bowman's house is a rundown "shotgun cottage" and the Meighan's, although "dolled up" by fluffy window curtains held by baby-blue satin bows, a cottage not much larger, the Meighan's house in the movie script is described as a mansion with big porch pillars and "a staircase, much too grand for the present style of the house." The action takes place up and down the stairway, through the rooms of the first and second floor, and even in the attic, where the decrepit condition of the big house results in cracking beams and falling plaster.

Another change is in the size and age of *Baby Doll*. Flora Meighan is called "an elephant woman" by her husband, who says that even when he married her she was "a woman not large but tremendous!" Of *Baby Doll* Bowman, Williams says, she is "a large and indolent woman, but her amplitude is not benign." As to age, Flora is probably not a great deal younger than her sixty-year-old husband, and Archie Lee and *Baby Doll* Bowman, whose Aunt Rose is 85, act middle-aged and long-married. Since *Baby Doll* of the movie is, although described as voluptuous, still a handsome-figured young woman not yet twenty years old, the difference between her and the wife in either of the one-acts is striking.

A third difference is in the situation of the wife in *Baby Doll*. Whereas Flora and Jake Meighan obviously have had a long and earthy sexual relationship, and *Baby Doll* and Archie Lee Bowman apparently enjoy a normal marital life, *Baby Doll* in the movie is, much to the perturbation of her husband, still a virgin.

In the story, "The Ponder Heart," by Eudora Welty, which appeared in *The New Yorker* in December, 1953, and in book form in 1954,³ the setting, character of the wife, and her situation correspond in certain respects to those of the movie, *Baby Doll*. Bonnie Dee Ponder is the teen-age, virgin bride of Uncle Daniel Ponder. She lives with him in

2. "The Boundaries of Tennessee" in *The Passionate Playgoer*, ed. George Oppenheimer (New York, 1958), p. 251.

3. The dramatization by Joseph Fields and Jerome Chodorov opened in New York on Feb. 16, 1956.

a huge old decaying mansion. Like Baby Doll's, hers is a trial marriage, the consummation of which she avoids by running away when the trial period is over. Baby Doll avoids the consummation of her marriage by the claim that, her furniture having been removed by the Ideal Pay As You Go Plan Furniture Company, the agreement with Archie Lee is void. Bonnie Dee does not sleep in a crib like Baby Doll, but she is very childish, enjoying a frequent game of jacks with Narciss, the old Negro housekeeper and clipping dozens of coupons from magazines. Both seem to take more pleasure in the possession of furniture than in its use, for Baby Doll has bought five rooms full on time, and Bonnie Dee buys a washing machine, which she keeps on the front porch because the house is not wired for electricity.

Conversely the dissimilarity between the tone of the one-acts and that of *Baby Doll* makes the likenesses between *The Ponder Heart* and *Baby Doll* more meaningful. *The Ponder Heart* is frequently farcical⁴ and *Baby Doll* at times riotously funny.⁵ The deep pity one feels for Flora Meighan as she distractedly rocks her big white kid purse in her arms and sings, "Rock-a-bye baby," is not duplicated for Baby Doll at the movie's end. The question of whether the mother protects the baby or the baby protects the mother—from being lost and empty—as Vicarro claims in the one-act, is not brought out in the movie, for Baby Doll does not cling to a purse, but rather acts the part of the baby herself. (At one point the theme is intimated when she cradles Vacarro in her arms and sings "Rock-a-bye baby" to him as he goes to sleep in the crib.) Baby Doll, however, is pretty well able to take care of herself, as is Bonnie Dee Ponder, and it is their husbands who appear foolish. Uncle Daniel Ponder is a lovable, soft-headed old gentleman, unlike Archie Lee in native character, but like him in being at the mercy of the whims of a virgin bride.

It has been suggested that in *Baby Doll* Williams is satirizing the romantic concept of the South found in a book like *Gone With the Wind*: Baby Doll is Scarlet O'Hara a hundred years later; Archie Lee is Ashley Wilkes; and the outsider, Vacarro, is Rhett Butler. As in his other dramas of southern degeneracy, however, Williams writes with such understanding—indeed, almost with sympathy—that satire hardly seems his aim and *Gone with the Wind* hardly his inspiration. If specific sources were to be sought, besides Williams' two one-acts, *The Ponder Heart* might more likely be among them.

4. See the review by Wolcott Gibbs in *The New Yorker*, XXXII, No. 1 (Feb. 1956), 86.

5. See the review by Arthur Knight in the *Saturday Review*, XXXIX (Dec. 29, 1956), 23.

SUDDENLY LAST SUMMER: WILLIAMS AND MELVILLE

THE NEW YORK CRITICS accorded Tennessee Williams' long one-act play, *Suddenly Last Summer*,¹ a confused reception when it was originally produced in New York. Though practically all of them praised the craftsmanship of the play, its content was generally written off as merely more Williamsian sexual sound and fury, signifying nothing. The theme was reported by one critic as being "the difference between coldly sane brutality like the mother's and passionately insane brutality like the birds' and the murderers',"² while another called it "the iniquity of the truth not told, festering."³ Harold Clurman, in *The Nation*, even professed to see in the play an allegory of the original production of *Orpheus Descending*. The play is a product, he said, of "the author's experience, suddenly last spring, with the critics."⁴

It is my thesis that the theme of the play may be clarified by taking as a starting point the Melville allusion in the first scene and tracing its implications through the play. This study, I am convinced, will show that the concern of the play is with neither the failure of *Orpheus Descending*, nor the iniquity of hiding the truth, nor the contrast between "natural" and "unnatural" evil, but with the very Melvillian problem of the nature of the universe, in this case, the universe of sex.

It is in the first scene that the dead Sebastian is characterized. Dr. Cukrowicz and the audience see him, through the veil of his mother's adulatory description, as an emotionally sterile and physically effete, rapidly aging Young Man who, butterfly-like, flits with his mother from watering place to watering place in search of the sun and, perhaps, of vitality. A pretentiously amateur poet, he produces an annual "Poem of Summer": in its difficulty of delivery, an ironically convincing proof of his sterile invention.

It is also in this first scene, however, that Sebastian is established as an inquirer, in his way, into the nature of the universe. Mrs. Venable describes Sebastian's fascination with Melville's description of the Encantadas and their retracing of Melville's voyage there. While on the Encantadas, they have witnessed the terrible spectacle of the flesh-eating sea-birds devouring the newly hatched sea-turtles on their way to the safety of the water. Sebastian's fascination with the sight is explained by Mrs. Venable thus:

1. Tennessee Williams, *Suddenly Last Summer* (New York, 1958).

2. Henry Hewes in *Saturday Review*, Jan. 25, 1958, 26.

3. Richard Hayes in *The Commonwealth*, May 30, 1958, 233.

4. Harold Clurman in *The Nation*, Jan. 25, 1958, 87.

I can tell you without any hesitation that my son *was* looking for God, I mean for a clear image of Him. He spent that whole blazing equatorial day in the crow's-nest of the schooner watching this thing on the beach till it was too dark to see it, and when he came down the rigging he said, "Well, now I've seen Him!," and he meant God.—And for several weeks after that he had a fever, he was delirious with it.—

It is obvious that the play is built upon the horrible irony of Sebastian's death echoing this morbid spectacle; if the irony represented only the just punishment of a corrupt and corrupting man, we would be justified in condemning the naïveté of this resolution. Examination of the play will, however, show that the irony is deeper than this.

Sebastian's vision of evil is not an isolated act; it is the basis of his whole existence. We are prepared for this by the set which is revealed at the first curtain: Sebastian's garden,

a fantastic garden which is more like a tropical jungle, or forest, in the prehistoric age of giant fern-forests when living creatures had flippers turning to limbs and scales to skin. The colors of this jungle-garden are violent, especially since it is steaming with heat after rain. There are massive tree-flowers that suggest organs of a body, torn out, still glistening with undried blood; there are harsh cries and sibilant hissings and thrashing sounds in the garden as if it were inhabited by beasts, serpents and birds, all of savage nature . . .

Sebastian's garden, then, is the fanciful hobby of a man obsessed with the savage face of nature; we realize this even more intensely when Mrs. Venable describes Sebastian's feeding the insectivorous Venus flytrap with fruit flies flown in from Florida.⁵

Sebastian's reaction to his cruel vision is consistent; Catherine describes his despairing passive acceptance:

He! - accepted! - all! - as - how! - things! - are! - And thought nobody had any right to complain or interfere in any way whatsoever, and even though he knew that what was awful was awful, that what was wrong was wrong, and my Cousin Sebastian was certainly never sure that anything was wrong! - He thought it unfitting to ever take any action about anything whatsoever! - except to go on doing as something in him directed . . .

And it should be remembered that Sebastian had once entered a Buddhist monastery in the Himalayas, from which he was wrested by his mother only at the expense of ignoring her husband's dying plea for her return.

In this context, the reference to Melville's *The Encantadas*, or

5. This theme of the bestiality of nature is echoed too, in the symbolic place-names of the play, Lion's View and Cabeza de Lobo (Wolf's Head).

Enchanted Islands is startlingly appropriate. Melville's series of sketches describe a literally God forsaken place.

But the special curse, as one may call it, of the Encantadas, that which exalts them in desolation above Idumea and the Pole, is, that to them change never comes; neither the change of seasons nor of sorrows. . . . The showers refresh the deserts; but in these isles, rain never falls. Like split Syrian gourds left withering in the sun, they are cracked by an everlasting drought beneath a torrid sky. "Have mercy on me," the wailing spirit of the Encantadas seems to cry, "and send Lazarus that he may dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, for I am tormented in this flame."⁶

Describing the death of the turtles, Mrs. Venable says, "We saw the Encantadas, but on the Encantadas we saw something Melville *hadn't* written about." While she is literally right, Melville's view of the islands was ironically similar to Sebastian's. To him, as to Sebastian, the islands were a place where the masks of civilization fell away and the cruel face of God could be seen.

Nor are the tortoises neglected in Melville's account. The second sketch is entitled, "Two Sides to a Tortoise," and in it the turtles are seen as reminders of an antediluvian past, "newly crawled forth from beneath the foundations of the world." The turtles know no benevolent god; they are the "victims of a penal, or malignant, or perhaps a downright diabolical enchanter," doomed to the "strange infatuation of hopeless toil."

The human outcasts who are described as inhabitants of the islands are victims of this same enchanter. The Dog King, the Chola Widow, and the Hermit Oberlus all are fatherless souls thrown into the uniformly merciless hands of man, God, and nature. The grotesque and horrible Oberlus signs himself, "Fatherless Oberlus."

Melville hints however that the desolation of the Encantadas may be partly in the mind of the viewer. Even in this damned place, a ray of light may be found:

Even the tortoise, dark and melancholy as it is up the back, still possesses a bright side; its calipee or breast-plate being sometimes of a faint yellowish or golden tinge. . . . Enjoy the bright, keep it turned up perpetually if you can, but be honest, and don't deny the black. Neither should he, who cannot turn the tortoise from its natural position so as to hide the darker and expose its livelier aspect, like a great October pumpkin in the sun, for that cause declare the creature to be one total inky blot. The tortoise is both black and bright.⁷

6. Herman Melville, "The Encantadas; or, Enchanted Islands," in *Piazza Tales* (New York, 1948), p. 150.

7. *Ibid.*, pp. 154-5.

Sebastian's fascination with Melville's account is consistent, then, with his own fascination with the primeval and with his own vision of the evil face of God. But ironically Sebastian does not see the other theme of *The Encantadas*: the theme that the universe will be "one total inky blot" for him who sees it thus. And ironically the world which Sebastian sees mirrored in the spectacle of the turtles and the birds will turn and devour him as it devoured the turtles.

The echoes of this theme in Melville's later work, particularly in *Moby-Dick*, are likely to occur immediately to the reader. Ahab, like Sebastian, fancies that he has beheld the face of God. And Ahab's error, like Sebastian's, is that he fails to see that this "God" (the cruelty of the universe) is uncaring. Both protagonists attribute "inscrutable malignity" to this God, and both, because of this error, are themselves destroyed by this malignity. John Parke, in his study "Seven Moby-Dicks," makes exactly this point:

A significant part of the thematic framework of the book is the strong auctorial suggestion that the universe is neutral and unpurposeful in terms of human values and purposes. From this it follows that man's adaptation to the universe, to its limitations, opportunities, and destiny (favorable or otherwise) with which it presents him, shapes his whole concept of it.

For, if external nature simply does not concern itself with man's destiny, the malevolence or benevolence he attributes to it is obviously a mere projection of his own hate or love, fear or faith. But if he believes it malevolent—i.e., cannot accept whatever is accorded him of fate—and attacks it, it will prove malevolent, or prove to seem so, and expertly accommodate him in his own undoing—either physically, or inwardly through upheaval in his own nature, or both.⁸

There is an important difference in the visions of Ahab and Sebastian, however, that should be noted at this point: Sebastian's vision is glimpsed in a strong context of sex. The destruction of the turtles, it will be remembered, is the result of the annual ritual of egg-laying "on the blazing sand-beach of a volcanic island." Sebastian's wound, too, is not a missing leg, but his homosexuality.

If we read Sebastian's characterization in this light, the play may be seen as a struggle for the soul of Catherine between the dead Sebastian and Dr. Cukrowicz.⁹ Catherine, too, has received her wound on the battlefield of sex; her narration of the incident at the Duelling Oaks establishes this. She may, like the English sea captain in *Moby-Dick*, accept her wound and decline to seek out and confront the whale, or she may, like Ahab and Sebastian, attribute a malignant

8. John Parke, "Seven Moby-Dicks," in Charles Feidelson, Jr. and Paul Brodtkorb, Jr., (eds.), *Interpretations of American Literature* (New York, 1959), pp. 87-88.

9. "Cukrowicz," as the doctor himself comments, means "sugar" in Polish, and Mrs. Venable refers to him as "Doctor Sugar." Perhaps the name is intended to suggest a "sweetness and light" view of the universe.

purpose to her enemy that does not exist. Her temptation to choose the second alternative is shown in her decision to accompany Sebastian on his summer trip. And her final choice must be made in the spiritual vacuum of the modern world which Melville foreshadowed. In what appears at first to be an irrelevant aside, she exclaims to Dr. Cukrowicz, "Somebody said once or wrote, once: 'We're all of us children in a vast kindergarten trying to spell God's name with the wrong alphabet blocks!'"

It is impossible to avoid the conclusion that the whiteness of the world on that terrible day in Cabeza de Lobo is the same whiteness that Melville described in his famous forty-second chapter of *Moby-Dick*. Catherine describes the scene as they left the cafe:

It was all white outside. White hot, a blazing white hot, hot blazing white, at five o'clock in the afternoon in the city of—Cabeza de Lobo. It looked as if—

DOCTOR: It looked as if?

CATHERINE: As if a huge white bone had caught on fire in the sky and blazed so bright it was white and turned the sky and everything under the sky white with it!

This whiteness is the same ambivalent color in which man, as Melville notes, has seen beneficence and malevolence all through history, but which is, in fact, completely neutral. Only a man like Ahab (or Sebastian) can turn this symbol of mindless energy against himself and, by his own choice, destroy himself, paradoxically, with the evil which he himself imagined in this neutrality.¹⁰

Despite the shock value of the plot, *Suddenly Last Summer* is no more "about" homosexuality and cannibalism than *Moby-Dick* is "about" ivory legs and whaling. Catherine's "true story of our time and the world we live in," summarized thematically, is this: Two men—one dead and one alive, one who sees in the neutral whiteness of nature "one total inky blot" and one who seeks to restore to the insane the peaceful blueness of a summer sky—clash over the spirit of a young girl who is wavering between their two views of the world. The truth about the dead man's final walk into that terrible whiteness brings purgation, resolution, and sanity.

Suddenly Last Summer does not have the tragic scope of *Moby-Dick*; its backdrop is the narrower universe of sex and Sebastian could not be said to achieve Ahab's nobility in his similar struggle. Nevertheless, recognition of Melvillian elements in the play show its coherence and unity on a thematic level deeper than the surface horrors of the plot.

10. See Parke, 88.

BOOK REVIEWS

THEATRE AT THE CROSSROADS, by John Gassner, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 327 pp. Price \$5.95.

The trouble with John Gassner's recent commentary on the American theater, *Theatre at the Crossroads*, stems from the very quality for which Harold Clurman praises the book on the dust-jacket: "that rare virtue: common sense." Common sense does indeed characterize every paragraph of this immensely readable, engagingly articulate "chronicle" or "report" or "review" (Mr. Gassner's own terms) of the American theater of the Fifties. Part I, some 125 pages, is restricted to "interrogations and persuasions"—to why, theoretically and pragmatically, American drama is for the most part middlebrow and Philistine; and to what level it must jack itself up, if it is once again to be as lively and vital a theater as we like to believe it was in the Twenties. Part II amounts to a kind of practical criticism, always brisk and often keen-edged, of some 60 plays, old and new, produced in and around New York during the past decade. Grounded in the criteria for a healthy drama already postulated in Part I, these critical appraisals are all very fair, all highly commonsensical, and all infuriatingly even-tempered.

The result for this reviewer, as he neared Mr. Gassner's final pages, was a growing weariness of common sense and an unsuppressed longing for a strong dose of the righteous indignation that puts second-rate art firmly into a second-rate niche once and for all. This is not to say that Mr. Gassner should not have written his book as he did, but that I should have preferred him, with all his lightly carried learning, his varied experience in the American theater, and his eminence as a theatrical critic, to have written a different kind of book altogether. Who else on the American scene today is in so favorable a position for writing the kind of book American drama so desperately needs—the kind that sweeps the stage clean of the meretricious, the pretentious, the synthetic, and the commercially vendable sort of play that has overrun Broadway during the last ten years, and prescribes in blunt, even dogmatic, terms the sort of drama that should take its place? Such a book will not be praised for common sense. It will seethe with a Shavian sense of having been had; and it will say, with all the massive integrity of a poorly cadenced sentence of Eugene O'Neill, what Mr. Gassner says here, but says too urbanely, too tactfully, too neutrally (though Mr. Gassner is not finally neutral in his ultimate evaluations).

In his introduction Mr. Gassner calls his book both optimistic and pessimistic. And so it is. For we all can rejoice with Mr. Gassner that "theatre has been one of the few things in the twentieth century to escape thorough standardization except when enslaved by the super-state" (p. 4). But aside from this optimistic generalization the book in its entirety is a monument to sophisticated pessimism about the state of "one of the few popular institutions still worth taking seriously" (p. xiii). Mr. Gassner, however temperate in his language, is incurably honest: he loves the theater as only a man who knows it inside out can love it, but he knows also that it is a sick theater. Accordingly he diagnoses what ails it, and like all good diagnosticians he is careful not to overindulge his patient's hopes. Desperately he works to give credit where he can, but when one tots up his score sheet, one discovers that Mr. Gassner's Nays very considerably outbalance his Yeas.

Mr. Gassner's pessimism is an outgrowth of a complex of negative developments that has beset the contemporary playwright and play producer and director for many a year now. (1) Intellectual and emotional enervation. "The real defect in our theatre since 1948 has been the waning of passion and the dilution of critical intellect" (p. 46). One example among many: Truman Capote's *The Grass Harp*. "American society has been described as a children's paradise. The same description would fit the mid-century American theatre . . ." (p. 151). (2) Imaginative and moral enervation, which amount in their own way to intellectual and emotional flabbiness. Mr. Gassner argues that social and thesis drama too often fail because writers of such plays are content merely to judge, condemn, dogmatize, demonstrate according to formula. "The moral imagination is a form of *understanding*, whereas indignation is *judgment* signed and sealed" (p. 59). One example among many: Walter Macken's *Home Is the Hero*. "Broadway's present unresponsiveness [to plays in which human suffering seems finally insoluble or soluble by legislative means] is not due to high critical acumen. It is merely a sign of indifference both to fate and social responsibility which have invigorated much of the dramatic work of the past" (p. 159).

(3) Failure to characterize. "It has become increasingly necessary to remind ourselves that explanations and motivations do not bring characters to life in the theatre. Psychology cannot provide character creation" (p. 163). And (4) failure to perceive that stock characterization is stock characterization, however new the stock character may seem to be. "The assumption that perversion or mental disturbance automatically qualifies a character for rapt attention has virtually become an article of faith" (p. 163). One example among many for points 3 and 4: Arthur Laurents' *A Clearing in the Woods*. "The play was an excellent example of the modern tendency to interest ourselves overwhelmingly in character as a social or psychological problem until the problem overshadows the person" (p. 165).

(5) Failure to provide a central focus. "This tendency to wander from subject to subject is characteristic of much contemporary writing in which no central impulse—not to mention vision or conviction—seems to be present" (p. 132). One example among many: Tennessee Williams' *Orpheus Descending*. "As if to give special emphasis to the lack of direction that characterizes serious theatrical writing today Broadway opened the spring of 1957 with one of the most chaotic contemporary works of genius at its disposal" (p. 223). (6) Too much reliance upon craftsmanship, on the assumption "that skill can effect what only conviction actually can" (p. 179). One example among many: Elia Kazan's production of Archibald MacLeish's *J. B.* "The pragmatic principle followed by Broadway productions is that nothing should stand between the audience and the action and emotional drive. For this reason the successive calamities of J. B. were merged with considerable telescoping of the time element, whereas the calamities that befell J. B. in the [Yale] university production were kept distinct, with God and Devil clashing in debate between the separate episodes" (pp. 299-300). (7) Inability to write anything better than competent English. "The baby spotlight outshines the verbal icon and the poetry of language. Genius of the first order in this theatre tends to be electronic rather than literary" (p. 10). One example among many: Arthur Miller, in any of his plays. "Regardless of any shortcomings to which we may allude in evaluating his work (and the greatest of these, I believe, is the lack of language equal to his aspirations), Miller has been a major figure in the Western theatre" (p. 48). (8) Catering to middlebrow philistinism or wholesale defiance of it. The former includes "fusions of common matter with uncommon sensibility (*The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*) or mixtures of ordinary action with bizarre details, as in *Two for the Seesaw*" (p. 211). As

for the latter, the end may be "effects of desperation or sensationalism"; the end for the former are "acts of marketable compromise." Together, both types of play "comprise nearly all the theatre that commands any regard today or has any sort of future" (p. 211).

One would suppose that pessimism could go no further. But it does. In spite of the fact that Mr. Gassner counts off-Broadway productions a singular blessing to the determined play-goer, his assessment of such productions can only be called chilling. "Off-Broadway has only produced for the sake of producing, acted for the sake of acting, designed for the sake of designing, and written for the sake of writing. In the Fifties this motivation has been considered sufficient, and it often has seemed as if dedication to a private belief or intention, let alone a public conviction, is no longer considered necessary or possible" (p. 120).

Mr. Gassner has not, of course, found the last ten years of American theater a dead loss. He has much good to say about the work of Lillian Hellman, Arthur Miller, Tennessee Williams, Samuel Beckett, Bertolt Brecht, Robert Anderson, Archibald MacLeish, and of course Eugene O'Neill, who returned to his own. Mr. Gassner takes joy in relating, in the Fifties, and who restored to the American stage, whatever his lapses, the integrity that is associated with the tragic sense of life. In his evaluations of these writers can be found some glimmerings of the optimism Mr. Gassner claims for his book.

But in the end Mr. Gassner's level-headedness, his common sense, disappoint. Though he cannot be charged with the critical neutralism he disavows politely in Chapter 10 of Part I, he cannot be commended for taking the strong critical position he argues for in the same chapter—the obdurate and outright war against mediocre theater waged by Lessing, Shaw, and Nathan. These critics voiced their outrage with the theater as they found it uncompromisingly. Their negations more than implied positive convictions; their negations amounted in fact to positive demands upon playwrights and play producers. They were, in Mr. Gassner's own words, "creatively one-sided. . . . Anybody can be fair, but not everybody can be creative. What does the theatre need most: fairness or creativeness?" (p. 114).

Here we are at the nub of any final assessment of Mr. Gassner's book. In spite of everything that can be said for it (and I hope I have been implying that *Theatre at the Crossroads* is a book to be read and pondered), it suffers in the long run from Mr. Gassner's determination to be fair, his hesitation at being creative. Most of the plays he comments upon deserve to be called what Shaw would have called them—errant rubbish. Here we have Mr. Gassner as practical reviewer of plays for the daily press; as judge of plays for possible production by the Theatre Guild; and as professor of playwriting and dramatic literature at one of the great universities of the land. Each of these occupations, in all of which he has worked with distinction, has demanded that he be fair, commonsensical, and helpful—that he spot the good and decry the less than good in a piece of dramatic art. These habits of a lifetime—which produce in the end only beauties vs. faults criticism—have left their imprint on *Theatre at the Crossroads*.

One would suppose, for instance, that after thoroughly considering his own case for pessimistic assessment of current American drama, Mr. Gassner would apply his criteria with absolute austerity to the work of a mediocre playwright like William Inge (whose score has to be far below par according to Mr. Gassner's own critical yardstick) and dismiss him once and for all as a clever entertainer, just as he so dismisses the William Gibson of *Two for the Seesaw*. If in Gibson's play we have, as Mr. Gassner justly asserts (quoting Shaw), "the pseudo-Ibsenism of Pinero" (p. 214), we surely have it *par excellence* in *The Dark at the Top of the Stairs*. To be sure, Mr. Gassner finds flaw after flaw in the play, but his

appraisal of Inge is essentially an apologia for a writer who is ultimately not worth apologizing for.

The irony is that Mr. Gassner is trapped by his own honesty. Wryly he convicts himself in as sad a paragraph as can be found in a book that is fundamentally a sound indictment of a substantial period of modern American theater:

Unfortunately we blunt our judgment and give no help to creative effort when we endorse the esoteric uncritically or accept the pragmatic without reservation. This eclectic minority, of which I am a part, pursues a random kind of play patronage that never corrects its perspective. Perhaps this catchall urbanity is the only possible approach in an age of transition, but even the best of our New York seasons is a monument to the reign of flabby Alexandrianism rather than to true vitality in taste and creation. I do not think well of myself, either, for enjoying plays as antipodal as *Two for the Seesaw* and *Endgame* instead of being enraged by one or the other. I am ashamed to find myself raising only a mild protest against the nihilism of the artistic left or the philistinism of the right (pp. 211-212).

Theatre at the Crossroads is, then, invaluable as an addition to theater history, and in its own qualified way, to the literature of dramatic criticism. But it is not the book Mr. Gassner has it in him to write, the kind of book he is fully prepared to write: a book outrageous in its demands upon the contemporary theater, contemptuous of the second-best, contentious from first to last, and idiosyncratic to the core—a book that forgets to be fair and cultivates the difficult business of being thoroughly intolerant in a just cause.

WALTER N. KING

André Frank, *GEORGES PITOEFF* (Collection, *LE THÉÂTRE ET LES JOURS*, L'Arche Editeur).

A grands traits mais avec une vivante précision M. Frank retrace la carrière de celui qu'il estime l'animateur "le plus généreux, le plus génial" du théâtre français de l'entre-deux-guerres.

L'ouvrage, qui suit un plan chronologique, étudie d'abord les années de formation dans l'ardente Russie prévolutionnaire, et mettant à profit—exclusivement—les témoignages de Pitoeff, et de ses proches souligne quelques influences: l'admiration pour Tchekhov, la rencontre de Vera Kommissarjevskaja qui le fait travailler aux côtés de Meyerhold, puis la pratique du théâtre ambulant, et quelques années plus tard, la révélation de la Rythmique; dans un long texte cité, Pitoeff explique comment il a trouvé dans le rythme une force capable d'exprimer "les mouvements secrets de notre âme," et "le point de départ et le fondement le plus puissant de toute réalisation scénique." Stanislavski enfin, le maître prestigieux mais dont il va bientôt se détacher: "Le vrai ne lui suffisait plus; il réclamait l'accès au royaume des rêves," explique M. Frank, rapprochant fort justement Pitoeff des premiers surréalistes, mais sans éclairer plus avant ses rapports avec le fondateur du Théâtre d'Art et les autres novateurs de l'école russe.

Pour ce que Pitoeff a appelé sa "seconde vie théâtrale" et qui se déroule tout entière en Occident, M. Frank dispose d'une documentation abondante et parfois inédite. Il le suit de pièce en pièce, conte des anecdotes, étudie les réactions des auteurs et du public, et admire la fièvre créatrice de l'acteur-décorateur-metteur en scène qui, au mépris de toutes les difficultés financières, aura, dans un tourbillon incessant de créations et de reprises—liste chronologique en est dressée—, monté 254 pièces de 114 auteurs différents. Ainsi ce Slave transplanté, infatigable lecteur de manuscrits et providence des jeunes dramaturges, aura proposé, nous dit-il, comme le premier répertoire d'un futur théâtre international.

Sur la question capitale de son apport à l'art de la mise en scène M. Frank n'a pas, et on peut le regretter, rédigé d'étude systématique. S'abritant derrière les documents, les citations brillamment commentées, il a préféré multiplier les illustrations, dont certaines remarquables. Il essaie de reconstituer son travail de création, montre Pitoëff dessinant ses décors, faisant jouer les matériaux les plus simples, inventant pour chaque pièce le "détail génial" qui en éclaire le sens: ainsi le médaillon où s'inscrit "La Dame aux Camélias; ainsi l'ascenseur d'où montaient, "livides sous la lumière verte, jaillis du mystère même de la création," les "Six Personnages En Quête d'Auteur." Il insiste sur sa recherche du symbole, son souci de l'unité: tous les arts, toutes les composantes du spectacle, musique à motifs, éclairages savants, diction incantatoire, jeu intériorisé des acteurs, devaient se fondre et créer une "atmosphère."

Dans cette "croisade pour une pureté dramatique totale," Pitoëff en France n'était pas seul, et si M. Frank le rapproche de ses compagnons du Cartel dans la croyance qu'il avait en la toute-puissance créatrice du metteur en scène transfigurant les oeuvres dramatiques sans considération préalable de leurs auteurs, il borne là ses comparaisons. Par contre, liaison fort intéressante est faite avec certains animateurs comme Jean Vilar qui s'emploient actuellement à constituer ce théâtre populaire que Pitoëff, résolument moderne, appelait déjà de tous ses vœux.

JACQUELINE BASTUJ

ASPECTS OF MODERN DRAMA, edited by M. W. Steinberg, Holt-Dryden, New York, 1960. 633 pp. Price \$3.00.

Anthologies of drama, especially modern drama, are a hard problem. Novels are plentiful, each one separate, most of them paperbound and inexpensive. Forty or fifty short stories can be put into one reasonable volume and provide enough variety to satisfy most tastes. But plays—even Gassner's impressive, newly revised volume which ranges authoritatively from Ibsen to Ionesco in 1275 double column pages most likely does not contain all the plays which any one instructor will consider the *sine qua non* in his course, not to speak of the general public. As a result we have few middle-sized, inexpensive, well-printed anthologies, and the trepidation of publishers and editors at venturing out into the wide open spaces of modern drama can be understood.

Professor M. W. Steinberg has ventured, and on the whole very successfully. The choice of modern plays is so idiosyncratic a matter that a reviewer can easily lose himself in comments on works included and left out. It is more useful therefore to consider two points: the criteria of selection, and the ways in which the plays combine and contrast with each other. Mr. Steinberg confines himself to English and American plays and divides his dozen about evenly between them. He has ordered them alphabetically and thereby avoids national labels and chronology, both fairly meaningless in a contemporary setting. Shaw and O'Neill are there, and Miller and Williams, but also some surprises: Galsworthy and Maxwell Anderson, and a one-act play by Yeats. Three one-acts are included which seems like a very good idea; besides Yeats' *The Dreaming of the Bones* and the obligatory *Riders to the Sea* we have *Man of Destiny*. In general one is quite safe in saying that all plays are intrinsically justified for their inclusion, though a few of them should be seen in comparison or contrast to each other to make that justification clear. In fact, the main strength of the volume lies in the combination of the plays. Comedies, for example, range easily from the most mannered

(yes, *Earnest* is present) to *The Playboy of the Western World* and *The Time of Your Life*. Two plays experiment with masks: Yeats', and *The Great God Brown*—and even a third can be said to do so, *Man of Destiny*. The well-made play (*Strife*) can be contrasted in manner or structure to *The Time of Your Life*, or in means to the poetic drama of Yeats or Anderson's chronicle of *Elizabeth the Queen*. And as two authors, Shaw and Synge, are each represented by a one-act and a full length play, comparisons in mode are possible, too.

Some of the plays are rare, even in anthologies, and that is welcome, though the volume wisely does not rely on rarity as a main point. Several of the plays are frequently seen, such as *Candida*, to my mind Shaw's major play least likely to succeed in the classroom. At first sight, in fact, one may regret the inclusion of *Death of a Salesman* or *The Glass Menagerie*, readily available elsewhere, until one realizes that Miller and Williams have to be represented in this context and that no other plays will represent them nearly as well. I hope that one day an editor (and, of course, a publisher) will have the courage to print all the materials with which he wishes to surround a play and then, with an appropriate reference, leave *Candida* to the Penguins.

The material with which Mr. Steinberg surrounds the plays is unexceptionable in its clarity and basic usefulness. He has no critical introductions or study questions which, as he says, "tend to slant interpretation of the text." Instead, each play is preceded by a short statement which places it in the body of the author's work with care and objectivity. Then comes a short bibliography of critical essays or other studies ranging from PMLA via *Modern Drama* to *Encounter*. The emphasis seems to be on pieces that present issues or points of view. After each play Mr. Steinberg has one or two usually rather full critical statements by the playwright, most of them bearing directly on the play. Some of these are excellent, like the excerpts from the correspondence between Shaw and Ellen Terry ("... *Candida*, between you and me, is the Virgin Mother and nobody else"). A few are debatable, such as the one paragraph of Saroyan's which preempts the basic idea of *The Time of Your Life* without adding much of another dimension to it. Most are good, relevant, substantial essays by Miller, Yeats, Shaw of course, and Anderson. These selections have two main advantages: in general they reinforce the manifold contrasts and juxtapositions of the plays; and in particular they can give rise to much more precise, meaningful, and intellectually valid student essays and term papers. Mr. Steinberg's anthology, augmented with a few single volumes, can be a very good basic text in a course in modern drama.

HENRY W. KNEPLER

THE ART OF RUTH DRAPER, Martin Dauwen Zabel, Doubleday and Company, 1960, 373 pp. Price \$4.95.

In 1923, when I met Dorothy Sands at the Breadloaf School of English in Vermont, she told me, "I am making a break with my conservative Massachusetts family and am going to New York. I hope to do something in the theatre such as Ruth Draper is doing, though I know I can never touch her genius and popularity." (Miss Sands became a well-known Broadway actress.) In 1953 for the last time I saw Ruth Draper in her one-woman show in Claremont, California. In 1923 she was a fabulous performer; in 1953 she had lost none of her old magic: when she came on the stage and began her impersonations, the miracle happened once more as it had been happening for over forty years.

Miss Draper died in 1956 and now a book about her, *The Art of Ruth Draper* by Martin Dauwen Zabel has appeared.

On the dust wrapper the publishers declare, "*The Art of Ruth Draper* re-creates in a brilliant cameo biography and in thirty-five monologues . . . the genius of a great actress and a fabulous woman." With regret it must be stated that this is not true. We are given no insight into Miss Draper's art. Only on page 91 and on a few pages which follow is there anything said or suggested concerning her art. She is quoted as stating that what she accounted as the essentials of her art were "curiosity and energy in herself and imagination in her audience." These three elements, which have been mentioned before by many, are discussed briefly and without recompense for the reader.

One learns very little about her art; one also learns but little about the artist. The subject of the book never comes to life. There are many catalogues of her tours, where she performed, the people she met, the friends she made; but we never seem to meet her; she is presented with neither intimacy, warmth, nor feeling. We want to know many things which we are not told: intimate, revealing, significant things: her response to audiences, her home life, why she presumably never had a lover; we hope in vain for anecdotes, stories which reveal her nature and character. Only once do we feel her excitement in the story of her alliance with the young Italian poet, Lauro de Bosis, who opposed Mussolini. Unfortunately when we finish the first third of the book which is titled "A Memoir," we have learned surprisingly little about either the artist or her art.

A few years ago Eric Barnes wrote a biography of an earlier American actress, Anna Cora Mowatt, in a book called *Lady of Fashion*. Miss Draper and Mrs. Mowatt have many points of similarity in their backgrounds and careers. Mrs. Mowatt emerges as a strong, lovable, living personality. Surely what Barnes did for the earlier actress, Zabel could have done for his lady.

In the latter part of the book, thirty-five of Miss Draper's monologues are printed. One questions the wisdom of including all of these. They are neither outstanding literary compositions nor unusual dramatically. These written words were but a minor part of what the actress gave her public; they provided her with the basic material for her performances; but the magnificent control, flexibility, feeling, and power of her voice cannot be reproduced; in each of the monologues are dozens of series of dots indicating the places in which the artist paused and filled the pause with gesture, movement, some piece of sharp visual characterization. These pauses count for nothing positive in the printed monologue. The one point that comes across in them is that Miss Draper possessed a keen sense for realistic verbal characterization.

Finally, the book contains thirty-eight portraits and photographs of the subject. There is not enough variety and interest in them to warrant this excessive number.

To those who were privileged to see Miss Draper, who experienced her power to move an audience to terror, sentiment, or the lightest of humor, the book is a disappointment. Those who never saw her, who never fell under her spell, can find little in it which will lead them to understand, appreciate, and love this unique artist of our theatre.

ALLEN CRAFTON

BOOKS RECEIVED

(The appearance of a book in *Books Received* does not preclude its subsequent review.)

- A Theater in Your Head*, by Kenneth Thorpe Rowe, Funk & Wagnalls, New York, 1960, 438 pp. Price \$6.95.
- The Art of Ruth Draper*, by M. D. Zabel, Doubleday and Company, New York, 1960, 373 pp. Price \$4.95.
- The Killer and Other Plays*, by Eugene Ionesco, Grove Press, New York, 1960, 159 pp. Price \$1.95.
- Interpreting Hamlet: Materials for Analysis*, edited by R. E. Leavenworth, Howard Chandler, San Francisco, California, 1960, 265 pp. Price \$1.75.
- American Drama*, edited by Alan S. Downer, Thomas Y. Crowell, New York, 1960, 261 pp. Price \$2.75.
- Brand*, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Michael Meyer, Doubleday & Company (Anchor Book) Garden City, New York, 1960, 157 pp. Price \$.95.
- The Drama of German Expressionism: A German-English Bibliography*, by Claude Hill and Ralph Ley, University of North Carolina Press, Chapel Hill, 1960, 221 pp. Price \$6.50 Cloth, \$5.00 Paper.
- Theatre at the Crossroads, Plays and Playwrights of the Mid-Century American Stage*, by John Gassner, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1960, 327 pp. Price \$5.00.
- The Andersonville Trial*, by Saul Levitt, Random House, New York, 1960, 120 pp. Price \$2.95.
- An International Vocabulary of Technical Theatre Terms in Eight Languages* (American, Dutch, English, French, German, Italian, Spanish, Swedish), edited by Kenneth Rae and Richard Souther, Theatre Arts Books, New York, 1959, 139 pp. Price \$3.25.
- Five Plays of Strindberg*, newly translated by Elizabeth Sprigge, Doubleday and Company (Anchor Book), New York, 1960, 35 pp. Price \$1.45.
- A Selection from Around Theatres*, by Max Beerbohm, Doubleday and Company (Anchor Book), New York, 1960, 346 pp. Price \$1.45.
- When We Dead Awaken and Three Other Plays*, by Henrik Ibsen, translated by Michael Meyer, Doubleday and Company (Anchor Book), New York, 1960, 376 pp.
- The Prodigal*, by Jack Richardson, E. P. Dutton & Company, New York, 1960, 114 pp. Price \$3.00 Cloth, \$1.35 Paper.
- Ibsen, Volume VI, An Enemy of the People, The Wild Duck, Rosmersholm*, translated and edited by James Walter McFarlane, Oxford University Press, New York, 1960, 464 pp. Price \$5.75.
- Theatre: The Rediscovery of Style*, by Michel Saint-Denis, Theatre Arts Books, New York, 1960, 110 pp. Price \$3.00.
- Moscow Theatres*, by V. Komissarzhevsky, translated by Vic Schneierman and W. Perelman, Foreign Language Publishing House, Moscow, Russia, 219 pp. Price \$5.00.

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